THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM IN THE WORK OF ROSEMARY RADFORD RUETHER

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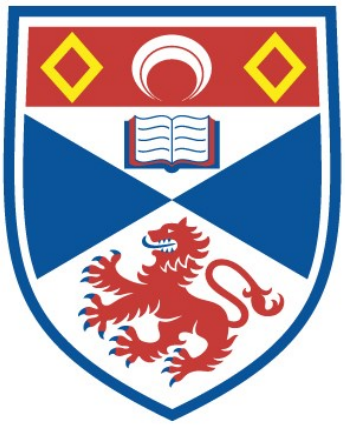

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THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

IN THE WORK OF ROSEMARY RADFORD RUETHER

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Rev. Steven G. Mackie,
St. Mary's College,
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the following thesis is based on the results of research carried out by myself, that it is my own composition, and that it has not previously been presented for a Higher Degree. The research was carried out at the University of St. Andrews under the supervision of Revd. Steven G. Mackie.

PREFACE

Two recent books by Rosemary Radford Ruether, Disputed Questions: On Being A Christian and To Change The World: Christology and Cultural Criticism, appeared too late to be taken into consideration in this thesis, which deals with her work published prior to 1981, and are consequently referred to only in occasional footnotes.

There are many who have helped me by their encouragement, support, and patience. I should like to thank Rosemary Ruether for her openness and cooperation. Also, the Revd. Steven G. Mackie deserves my praise as a most helpful adviser. My husband, Revd. Dr. G. A. Weir, has borne the burdens of financial support, psychological enablement, and proof-reading. To my sons, David and Robert, I express gratitude for their liberated understanding that mother's place is not only in the kitchen. There are many others to whom I owe thanks: my students in Zaire and Canada, my congregation, friends, parents, library assistants. May all involved know of my thankfulness for this opportunity for growth and increased insight.

ABSTRACT

THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM IN THE WORK OF ROSEMARY RUETHER

Freedom is a central concept in contemporary theology. However, what freedom means is blurred and unclear. To try to understand more precisely, the thought of a theologian who stands at the mid-point of the debate has been studied. Rosemary Ruether is a modern feminist theologian who has considered Christian origins and the human quest of liberation in detail as well as in considerable breadth, touching upon a wide variety of concerns that contribute to her concept of freedom.

In Ruether's work certain key themes emerge. She stresses the ideas of creation (as a continuum that includes redemption and new creation), gnostic and apocalyptic dualism, ecclesiology, eschatology, and christology. From these preoccupations arises Ruether's understanding of freedom as wholeness, mutuality, struggle towards the future, and participation in the people of the promise. For Ruether, freedom means salvation in the biblical and Hebraic sense. Although the theology of the women's movement covers a broad spectrum, Ruether's concept of freedom is consistent with that of most other feminist theologians.

The feminist concept of freedom, as expressed by Ruether, has much in common with the socio-political liberation theology of Gustavo Gutierrez. Like Latin American theology, Ruether's theology is biased towards the oppressed; it is based on a corporate understanding of faith, and it proposes a new way of doing theology which arises out of the context. But Ruether does not regard Marxist analysis as sufficient, and

sees the limitations of apocalyptic tendencies in liberation theology. In ways, Ruether's theology is less dependent on traditional approaches than that of Gutierrez.

The self-actualisation psychology of Abraham Maslow also has a number of resemblances to Ruether's feminist idea of freedom: both emphasize wholeness, humanism, mutuality, transcendence, utopian hope, and struggle. But Ruether's theology of freedom is not merely an adaptation of Maslovian psychology, since they differ on their commitment to the poor, on theism and organised religion, and on Maslow's emphasis on the individual.

The concept of freedom held by Rosemary Ruether (and by many other feminist theologians) has much in common both with the liberation theology of the poor world and with the approach to freedom through personal fulfilment that is characteristic of affluent culture. Ruether is correct in saying that woman's growing awareness stands at the intersection between the freedom movements of the first and third worlds. But Ruether's freedom is not merely a combination of the two, but a unique contribution to modern theology. Despite some limitations, Ruether has contributed significantly to the theological quest for the meaning of freedom and can be expected to continue to do so.

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INTRODUCTION

Freedom means many things to many different people. It serves as a rallying point for many causes, and yet there is no little ambiguity about what the modern world understands by freedom. In this thesis, I am searching for freedom's meaning and significance. In particular, I have chosen to look through the eyes of a liberation theologian, Rosemary Radford Ruether, as she deals with many twentieth century issues using the critical resources of her scholarship in historical theology. She is particularly concerned with the theological significance of the women's movement. Therefore, I shall be looking at freedom with special reference to its meaning in the feminist theology of Rosemary Ruether.

Strange but true: the discussion of women and freedom calls forth immediate emotion. Mention the labels "women's lib" or "feminist theology" and suddenly overheated reactions descend upon you; you are suspected of riding a hobby horse to nurse a personal grievance, or of being trivial, or of being a threat to all the powers (of thought and government) that be. Before one can clear one's throat and begin, the audience has stopped listening or assigned one neatly to a pigeon hole. Why? Such strength of response (or reaction) must mean something, must point its finger at an area of human concern which is threatening or of great significance.

In addition, there has been a recent flood of literature about women, especially about women and religion. It comes from many corners and with a vast range of intent and seriousness. It can not all be dis-

missed as merely a fad. This explosion of interest in woman's freedom seems to me to point to deep contemporary needs and preoccupations.

Basically, my question is a simple one: what is going on here? Is the current theological discussion about women and freedom of significance, and if it is, what is that significance? Many have hailed feminist theology as a "passing fancy", but one has also heard calm quiet voices saying that this might be the most important question of twentieth century theology. Is there any unique and enduring contribution, any new perspective or additional insight that feminist theology's understanding of freedom has to contribute to contemporary theological thinking? How does feminist theology with its understanding of freedom relate to other freedom oriented philosophies of our day?

In inquiring theologically about women and freedom, we are talking about human freedom. I assume that women are human and that we are no longer wondering whether or not women have souls. I understand the current interest in women's freedom as a part of the broader question of human liberty and the meaning of human being. Far too often, theologians have avoided the aspect of human sexuality in speaking about humankind; they have been contented to conclude that humanity was created in the image of God without saying anything at all about that image being male and female. Even in the World Council of Churches' project on the humanum[1], David Jenkins almost entirely avoids dis-

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[1] David Jenkins, The Humanum Studies. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1975.

cussion of the sexual composition of humanity, although he touches on many concerns that are related to feminist theology. One wonders why the obvious sexual diversity of humankind is theologically ignored in the very circles where racism, classism, and divergent cultures are so vigorously dealt with? Have women and men merged together into a grey shapeless "man" where the creative tension of sexuality is forgotten? Or is it that the sexual dimension of what it means to be human is so deep, profound, intense, and personal that many theologians are embarrassed and afraid to attempt understanding? Silence often speaks louder than words about the depths of reality; but understanding must seek words to articulate the truth that frees persons from their isolation. No human can escape being a sexual person: it is time that the beauty and the glory of human sexuality was considered as a significant aspect, if not the most significant aspect, of what it is to be human in the image of God.

Perhaps our former asexual understanding of the image of God in humankind has limited our thinking about God, humanity and the universe. Perhaps a new awareness of the creative tension between women-and-men-in-God would help us to break out of rigidity, destructive over-classification, and hierarchy-oriented theology. In learning that one can be equally a woman and a human, we become prepared to meet the both-andness of dynamic existence. Cooperation between the sexes might help us to appreciate the mysterious and dynamic nature of God who is continually creating and bringing to life. Perhaps theology might be led to a new understanding of the phrase "the body of Christ" in more than a metaphysical sense. The sexual nature of humanity might have a lot to say

to our theology of relationship in community.

I must begin by admitting that I do not intend to produce a "purely objective" piece of work. Any such claim would be both arrogant and unrealistic. I must admit who I am - a woman, a minister, a former missionary. There is no denying that my experience will influence my thought; indeed, without my experience I would never have begun to ask the questions which have produced my interest in women and freedom. For me this project is a real attempt to reflect critically on the search for freedom, an attempt which would find its true validation in liberating action, proclamation and life-style. In many ways, this study has been undertaken in the interests of my own survival as a committed Christian servant, and as someone dedicated to human equality and love for all persons. This work is done in the faith and hope that it might have a more than personal significance, that it might in some way aid others in their search for freedom. If what has been learned in doing this project remains "purely academic" then I shall have failed completely.

The question with which I am often confronted, "Are you primarily a woman or a minister?" may seem humorous. But behind it there is a serious problem in our thinking; why is ministry in our society conceived of in such a way that it seems incongruous for it to be done by a woman? Certainly the problem is more than a feminist one; where any group is limited, all people suffer a lack of richness, depth, and variety in ways that they can be human before God. When one identifies oneself

as a feminist,[2] too often it is assumed that one really wants to be a man or at least that one would like to see an undifferentiated unisex approach to life. But an important part of feminist theology is re-discovering the uniqueness of being female. Rather than being on the defensive with a "we can do it just as well as men", one is voicing the question, "What uniqueness do we have to contribute to all fields of human endeavour out of the richness of our experience and our consciousness?" There is ample opportunity for relearning the lesson that when one is most profoundly oneself, one is most in solidarity with others. Yet "differences" between people are often seen as threats rather than as enrichments. Is it possible that feminist theology might contribute to a vision that incorporates and unifies persons at the same moment that it affirms distinctiveness? Persons might be better understood as creatures able to participate in discovering and interpreting-in-action their own uniqueness: persons are godlike in their conscious awareness and decision about who they are. Such thinking might open the prison of the determinist type of belief in "ontologically" fixed roles or of the fatalistic acceptance of social conditioning.

It is therefore to be hoped that a consideration of feminist theology would not be seen as narcissistic or self-centred. Although the inquiry is one in which there is considerable personal involvement (and it would seem to me invalid and hypocritical if this were not admitted), I would

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[2] I am accepting the definition given by Letty Russell of feminist as someone "actually engaged in advocating the equality and partnership of women and men in church and society". Human Liberation in Feminist Perspective. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974. p. 19.

like to think that there is immense relevance to the total problem of being human-before-God today. No doubt, who I am will influence what I think and express, but truth can not be served unless one is aware that only in exposing one's humanness, prejudices, and biases, can irrationality be pointed out, taken into consideration, and dealt with. It is true that feminist theology is particularly pertinent to my situation; but 'my situation' might be the touchstone to understanding and illuminating the situations of many others.

Precisely because sexism is such a basic dilemma of the human situation, we are challenged to a certain comprehensive largeness of vision. Recently, a male undergraduate, on his first exposure to some concerns of the women's movement, commented, "But I don't understand its nonspecific nature - it's not one cause, it's many." He was right that there can not be merely one aim, issue, approach, or ideology to the theme of women and freedom. He would have been wrong if he had wanted to imply that the diffuseness of the woman problem indicated its unimportance. Rather, the expansiveness of the concern with woman points to something much bigger than its "surface issues." Looking beyond the immediate issues, one finds a complexity and vastness in the questions raised. One also finds oneself reaching out into many areas of study that previously seemed unconnected or only remotely related. Women's theology is a truly inter-disciplinary affair. While there is need for studies of precise and specific areas, there is also a need to try to pull the many corners of research and concern together into an understanding of the basic thrust of feminist theology. Ruether expresses the need for such a new breed of theological generalists; she appreciates

the immenseness as well as the importance of this task.[3] Women's theology, like the theme of women and freedom, is not something that one can easily get to the end of; rather it is an impetus, a perspective, a new way of seeking by a group of persons who have just become theologically literate.

There have been many isolated examples of individual women "doing theology" in the past, particularly amongst the mystics and the various saints of the church. But today's women are becoming theologically aware and intellectually acute in a new way. Up to now, individual women in theology have had little time or mutual support for discovering together the possible feminine dimension to our understanding of God. Now women are coming together to share new insights and ponder new questions as theologians. It seems to me that there is immense potential here for a source of renewal within the church and within theological inquiry. There is the danger that this new potential will be startling and threatening and that women's theology might, as a result, be belittled. There is also the task of "catching up" that must be done by women theologians. It will take time and much encouragement before women's theology will be maturely developed. Yet, in these current beginnings, one might perhaps do well to see the seeds of new life and the promise of richer things to come.

The problem of language presents itself immediately in writing on the topic of women and freedom. Not only does one need to use proper language, one needs also to find appropriate language: although one does not

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[3]Rosemary R. Ruether, Liberation Theology. New York: Paulist Press, 1972. p. 12.

wish to be "trendy" or "slangy", one does feel an obligation not to rob the topic of its vitality, colour, and interest by using an excessively scholarly style. In addition, if we pretend to take the subject matter seriously, we must learn to be inclusive in our expression, using terms such as humanity rather than man. The intensity of the language debate has been baffling and off-putting to many. And at times, there has been the impression that the whole woman's question is merely a matter of words, and is therefore trivial. Simply changing a few words here and there proves very little; but a radical review of how our language echoes our prejudiced cultural assumptions might be extremely helpful. Word-symbolism is so often taken for granted, that a new break-through in consciousness will inevitably search out new ways of saying what we mean. As women have been nearly invisible in much of Western culture and history, so they have little obvious presence in the habits of language. Now they are in need of acts of symbolic assertiveness, to reassure themselves and to declare to the world that they have a place, an important place, in the life and future of the church and the world. In most cases, using non-sexist language is hardly conspicuous; but words have a powerful way of slipping into the subconscious and influencing what we are and what we try to become. This is particularly true in the context of worship. Changing words demands a little initial effort, but it reaps its own fruits in causing us to re-examine carefully what it is that we are trying to communicate. In this thesis, I am not intending to be critical of other usages, but simply to strive for integrity in understanding and expression.

I believe that the search for freedom on the part of women (or of any

others) is profoundly and first of all eucharistic. It is based on gratitude; it is before anything else an affirmation of life and of the goodness of creation. In acknowledging, in wonder, that persons are meaningful creatures, one is immediately aware that humans are created for something, something which is given many names, but which spells freedom. Gratitude for our creatureliness-towards-freedom often leads to real anger, because of all that limits or thwarts or prohibits human fulfilment. Sometimes it is anger, not praise, which seems to be the first visible indication of the struggle towards freedom: but anger arises from the indignant feeling that things were created to be different. The search for freedom is not rebellious thought and action, but rather a passionate "yes" to God's good creation and to the new creation in Christ. It says "no" to social and personal fragmentation and to all that is destructive of what God has done and is doing to bring in the future.

This study cannot settle the theological "woman problem" any more than anyone could attempt a conclusive statement on the "theology of the human". I hope to point to and question what might be a new theological perspective rather than merely a theological self-justification of feminist consciousness. We should ask if there is anything here that is supportive of a more human and a more spiritual theological understanding? Is there anything here which prophetically calls into judgement not only systems of theology, but also ecclesiastical structures and actions?

How do we go about such an understanding? I have chosen a major feminist theologian, Rosemary Ruether, to act as representative of

"feminist theology." Rosemary Ruether is one of the 'more serious' feminist theologians, bringing considerable previous scholarship to bear on the area of women's theology. I shall begin by asking what she means by freedom, considering her work up to 1980. Then I shall compare this with the definition of freedom articulated by Latin American liberation theologians as represented by Gustavo Gutierrez. Afterwards, I shall turn to the first world preoccupation with self-fulfilment, as seen in Abraham Maslow, for a further point of comparison. In doing this, I hope to bring both the social-political orientation of the "third world" quest for freedom and the present hopes for personal freedom through psychology to bear on what women in theology are trying to do. I shall try to draw from this a conclusion about the meaning of freedom in feminist theology and to assess whether this concept of freedom is of value for our wider theological understanding.

Working on a living and ever-productive theologian is both a joy and a problem. While there is the excitement of seeing continuing development, there is also the difficulty of never being able to attain completeness. For this reason, I have decided to take into consideration only the works of Ruether which appeared before the end of 1980. Occasionally it has been possible to make reference to work published after this date, even though this goes beyond the intended scope of this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

ROSEMARY RUETHER: THE WOMAN AND HER WORK

A. Who is Rosemary Radford Ruether?

Rosemary Radford Ruether is a woman, a theologian, an activist for the renewal of church and society. Born in 1936, she is still one of the younger figures amongst well-known contemporary American theologians. Married to Professor Herman J. Ruether, she is the mother of three children. Ruether is a lay person and member of the Roman Catholic Church, although her background and interests are broadly ecumenical. For ten years (1966-76), she was associate professor at Howard University School of Religion in Washington, D.C.; this is a predominantly black university. Currently, she is Georgia Harkness professor at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, a Methodist institution, in Evanston, Illinois. Not only has she an amazingly long list of publications (one hundred and thirty articles between 1963 and 1976; contributor to fifteen book symposia; author, co-author, or editor of twelve books), but Ruether has been a frequent speaker and lecturer (at approximately one hundred and twenty-five engagements at major universities and church conventions between 1965 and 1976, as well as lecturing at George Washington University (1966-67), Harvard Divinity School (1972-73), Princeton Theological Seminary (summer 1971 and 1973, spring 1973), Yale Divinity School (1973-74), and Sir George Williams University in Montreal (summer 1974)).[1]

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[1] Information from Vita of Rosemary Radford Ruether, supplied by Garrett-Evangelical Seminary, 2121 Sheridan Road, Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A., 1976.

It would be impossible to put Rosemary Ruether into a neat category. At first glance, there might seem to be many contradictions in her biography. Although well-known as a feminist liberation theologian, she has come to the women's movement and to contemporary concerns from a background in classical and patristic studies, ancient history and philosophy. She appreciates what she has learned in her studies of the origins of Western civilisation and Christianity, yet she feels that she could never return to an "ivory tower" type of scholarship which had no relation to current life and problems. On the other hand, she must hang on to historical roots and larger cultural concerns rather than being a seeker of relevance at all costs. She sees herself as a bridger of the gap between the purely abstract academic scholars and the action-reflection school of thought.[2] Ruether finds that her early study of the period five hundred years before and after Christ has given her keys to understanding the modern scene. Particularly, in her work on the women's movement, she finds that her insight arising from scholarship on the distant past is useful; the women's movement needs to reach back to the very origins of our civilisation in order to gain self-understanding. Rosemary Ruether does not claim that the approach of a classical-patristic scholar is the only one for understanding contemporary church and society; rather she feels that all knowledge is

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[2]Rosemary Ruether, "Beginnings: An Intellectual Autobiography" in Journeys: The Impact of Personal Experience on Religious Thought. ed. Gregory Baum. New York: Paulist Press, 1975. p. 51-52.
See also: Ruether, Disputed Questions: On Being A Christian. Nashville: Abington, 1982. This is an expanded version of the "Beginnings" article.

useful if it is harnessed to bring light to bear on the larger dimensions of human experience and the understanding of human identity.[3]

Rosemary Ruether does not conform to the stereotype of 'Roman Catholic Scholar'. She is doing the sort of work which would hardly have been possible in pre-Vatican II days. She is openly critical of the Church and takes an independent view on ethical as well as on theological issues. Not surprisingly, she has, in the past, wondered whether she could remain within the Roman Catholic Church. As a lay person, she has a certain freedom that clergy might not have, to be a seeker of the truth in relation to surrounding reality. She does not stay within the Catholic Church because she feels that it is "right", but because she sees it as a "paradigm for the human dilemma ... a terrible example of what we all are."[4] By remaining within the Church, she is accepting social and personal responsibility for its long history; she is accepting who she is with a full measure of self-criticism.[5] Ruether is not entirely alone; she is a part of the "radical Catholic movement" and/or "freedom movement" which is a lively phenomenon on the American scene; this movement has ties with political activism as well as with a different and renewing attitude towards the Church.

Rosemary Ruether is a feminist and a questioning Christian. Some would say that the two are incompatible. Although Ruether does not whitewash the patriarchal nature of the Judeo-Christian tradition, she

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[3]Ibid., p. 54-55. Also, "The Books That Shape Lives", Christian Century, Vol. XCIV. October 19, 1977. p. 962.

[4]Ibid., p. 55.

[5]Ibid., p. 55.

chooses to remain within that tradition which is still an on-going affair. She finds hints of sufficient hope in the past to be able to believe in the promise of hope for the future. Rosemary Ruether remains a Christian, although attempting to stretch Christianity into a new shape.[6] In contrast, there are feminist theologians, notably Mary Daly, who refuse to accept the Christian faith as their own because of its persistently patriarchal and sexist patterns of being.[7] Ruether remains a Christian, but she is questioning and re-interpreting the most basic aspects of the tradition. Again, in contrast, there are yet other feminist theologians who assume traditional and orthodox beliefs, but who are interested in a re-evaluation of the faith and the Church in feminist terms and language. Letty Russell would be an example of such a person.[8] There are also a number of conservative Christian feminists, such as Nancy Hardesty and Letha Scanzoni, writing from an evangelical viewpoint.[9] In many ways, Rosemary Ruether stands in the middle of the spectrum, remaining in the Christian faith, but radically critical of Church and doctrine. Feminist theologians are so diverse that Ruether could hardly be labelled "typical", but she well might represent a midpoint of feminist theological reflection.

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[6]Rosemary Ruether, From Machismo to Mutuality: Essays on Sexism and Woman-Man Liberation. New York: Paulist Press, 1976. p. 14.

[7]See Mary Daly, The Church and the Second Sex (Second Edition, With a New Feminist Post-Christian Introduction.) London: Harper & Row, 1975. Also Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973.

[8]Letty Russell, Human Liberation in Feminist Perspective. Westminster Press, 1974.

[9]Nancy Hardesty and Letha Scanzoni, All We Are Meant to Be: A Biblical approach to Women's Liberation. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1974.

Rosemary Ruether is not an armchair theologian. She has been a participant in human rights causes and active at the local level of Christian community. She worked with the Delta Ministry in Mississippi in the summer of 1966 as well as in the black ghetto of Watts in the aftermath of profound and explosive racial unrest. This involvement with black America led Ruether to a desire to be associated with the black community as a professor at Howard University, and also to be an advocate for racial equality with the white community.[10] The peace movement again found Ruether involved. Not without humour, Ruether has described her visit to the Justice Department with a group of women to express protest at the indictment of priest and peace activist Philip Berrigan and twelve of his "co-conspirators"; she notes her own "talent for confrontation", but also the insight that more than confrontation was needed to convert and transform her adversary and the total situation.[11] Ruether retains an uncommon ability to be self-critical and aware of other viewpoints, even though intensely involved within a movement. Similarly, Ruether combines participation with perspective in her church commitments. For example, she has been particularly involved with the inner-city black/white congregation of St. Stephen's and the Incarnation Episcopal Church in Washington, D. C., a congregation which is ecumenical in spirit and style. Here she has contributed to the educational programme both at the adult level and in

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[10] Ruether, "Beginnings: An Intellectual Autobiography," pp.53-54.

[11] Rosemary Ruether, "Beyond Confrontation: The Therapeutic Task," in "The Berrigans." (eds.) Williams Van Etten Casey, S.J. and Philip Noble. New York: Avon, 1971.

creating materials for its mainly black children. Her children's book, Communion is Life Together, is a result of this involvement. Yet she is quick to point out that church programmes and structures are not meant to last, but are in need of constant renewing improvisation.[12] Ruether has given of her time and energy to many church concerns, Protestant and Catholic. She has also participated actively in the women's movement, not only as a speaker and writer, but as a listener and helper of other women. Yet, even in this concern, she is not without critical insight which is at times infuriating to her feminist colleagues who lack her breadth of vision and experience.[13]

Most people will wonder how Rosemary Ruether can combine so many roles, so many concerns, so much scholarship with contemporary caring. I have often found Ruether's energy and scope amazing, and have been unable to dismiss her formidable achievement. But Ruether's many activities and interests have a way of running together, influencing each other and duplicating each other. One has the impression of a whole person of many aspects rather than a fragmented person pulled in a number of conflicting directions. In meeting Ruether, one is aware that she is someone who likes people as well as ideas, that she is a warm, listening, and responding human being.

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[12]Rosemary Ruether, "Education in the Sociological Situation, U.S.A." in Does the Church Know How to Teach? An Ecumenical Inquiry.(ed.) Kendig Brubaker Cully. London: Macmillan, 1970. pp.87-98.

[13]See Rosemary Ruether, "Crisis in Sex and Race: Black Theology vs. Feminist Theology." Christianity and Crisis. Vol. 34, No. 6, April 15, 1974. pp. 67-73. See also reactions and Ruether's reply to these in "Continuing the Discussion: A Further Look At Feminist Theology." Christianity and Crisis. Vol. 34. June 24, 1974. pp.139-143.

B. What Has Rosemary Ruether Written?

Rosemary Ruether has written a great deal. There is considerable overlap in her work. Often articles are incorporated in books; similar material appears in a number of places. This is probably because Ruether does not set out systematically to expound 'her' theology, but rather tackles a number of issues and problems. Much of her work should be called "responsive" in that it represents a response to a particular concern or to a particular request for material. Ruether has written a number of books on her own; she is also fond of collaborating with others in interesting ventures of joint authorship. Feminist theology depends upon wide-spread participation rather than on the emergence of a few "star" theological performers. Ruether seems willing to share the spotlight in print and to encourage others into print.

It is not always easy to date Ruether's material. Sometimes work appears to have been published considerably later than it was written. Also, material is re-used, added to, changed and adapted. However, I shall consider Rosemary Ruether's books in the order of their publication.

Themes continually re-emerge. But one does notice a development in Ruether's work. In the sixties, Ruether was more concerned with historical theology and ecclesiology; in the seventies, she emerged as a liberation theologian with special interests in sexism, anti-semitism, racism, and ecology. Nevertheless, there are no water-tight divisions in her work, so that one finds currents and ideas re-appearing and being modified continually.

Freedom is not a word that Rosemary Ruether uses often. The concept

is there, nevertheless. Freedom becomes a more dominant theme as Ruether emerges as a liberation theologian, yet the makings of her interest in liberty are present in her early work. We shall examine her work in detail in order to understand the concept of freedom.

1. The Church Against Itself

The Church Against Itself, published in 1967, is a book about dialectical ecclesiology. It was written after Vatican II, and is strongly critical of the institutional church. Ruether writes from the point of view that the church is essentially an eschatological community as well as a gathering of very human beings. This double nature of the church brings about the creative tension in which the people of God are called to live; the tension between what the church actually is and what the church is to become eschatologically. But wherever this tension is thrown aside and the church absolutizes itself and divinizes itself, then the church is against its true calling. This has happened all too often in history, the church becoming fallen through its "misappropriation of its relationship to God and man."[14] When the creative tension is lost in the church, freedom and truth are lost as well, even although the church was the mother of freedom. Repentance is necessary and Ruether's criticism is written with this as its aim. She sees the church, which has stood between God and humanity as a barrier, in need of re-definition and re-evaluation in the light

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[14]Rosemary Radford Ruether, The Church Against Itself. London: Sheed and Ward, 1967. p. 22.

of the gospel. Ruether sees the Declaration of Religious Freedom of Vatican II as a licensing of serious criticism and inquiry into the problem areas within the church's life.[15]

This book speaks out of the context of Ruether's Roman Catholic background. But she would certainly not fit the narrow definition of a Roman Catholic writer, but would see her work as "post-ecumenical". She would assume that all traditions have formed a part of her outlook. Ruether speaks often of schism within the church, and she does not mean denominational or catholic-protestant splits. Rather, for Ruether, the deeper schism in the church is between those who are ready to consider seriously contemporary biblical and theological studies and those who are not. This division cuts across all denominations, making the older discussions between catholics and protestants seem meaningless and out-dated. This book is written to illuminate this newer, deeper division, since it is the role of the church to reconcile the brokenness of humanity. Ruether stresses that often continuity in the handing on of the good news means discontinuity with what has gone before: tradition is the opposite of self-absolutising traditionalism; tradition happens where there is freedom. By ourselves, we cannot overcome the human tendency towards traditionalism. We must hope in God's faithfulness and live in the grace that God will raise up a people whenever and however he chooses. The Church can find itself as an eschatological community only in and through the deep tension and dichotomies of its real human and historical existence. Freedom in this book is indirectly seen as only possible in

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[15] Ibid., pp. 1-6.

the creative tension between what we are and what we are becoming. Freedom is the ability to have this tension; it is the capacity to be critical, scientific, and truthful because this struggle is one of liberation. Indeed, it is amidst the tension that one is probably most free.[16]

The Church Against Itself centres on this tension in the church, each essay being a spoke in the wheel, approaching the theme from a different angle. The first two-thirds of the book seem different from the last section of four chapters in tone and content. The early chapters deal with a number of standard problems in New Testament and church history scholarship: for example, the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, the need for apostolicity and objective authority, the problem of continuity and discontinuity, and the tension between history and eschatology. These are dealt with in a scholarly, if sometimes rather dry, way. In the last section, from chapter nine onwards, Ruether seems to loosen up and express herself more freely and more attractively, although still with a scholar's insight and background. These chapters come alive in a way which the preceding ones do not seem to.

In the first section of the book, two themes continually arise in connection with the question of an authentic ecclesiology. First, there is the tension between the nature of the church as eschatological community and its nature as a historical institution. Second, there is the theme of the dilemma of faith and culture: faith must express itself in the language of particular cultures, and yet it must be free from this expression to redefine itself. The historical institution is necessary

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[16]Ibid., pp. 1-13.

because objective symbols must be handed on to new generations; yet these symbols are not the faith, but only a possibility for the faith to be again renewed by the Spirit. Faith is not data, but an encounter and a relationship with God which cannot be judged by external standards however much it might be in need of external expression. The faith is forever reborn in the hearts of believers, yet the institution and the authorities of scripture and of apostolic office carry the possibility of rebirth through the desert periods and the nights of the soul. Freedom for faith is present wherever it is possible to recognise that the fulfilled essence of the Kingdom is always in the future and to respond to this meaningfully in the present. But where faith is absolutized in an unchanging and unchangeable cultural or institutional form, it becomes a 'fundamentalism', a kind of fulfilled messianism that denies freedom, and hence denies the possibility of new faith. That people should try to make the faith controllable and manageable by absolutising and objectifying it is very humanly understandable. It is also historically necessary. But the danger comes in projecting human need for images and history's need of institutional methods onto the divine essence of how things are and will always be. Faith must express itself, aware that all expressions are inadequate and limited. Freedom for faith is the ability to receive the Spirit anew, and dare: to be critical (as well as appreciative) of all which has gone before within one's own experience and the church's experience.

In chapters nine to twelve, Ruether seems to be primarily a theologian rather than the historical critic which she was in the first section of the book. She gives us some positive guidelines as to what

she sees as the characteristics of the people of God. Chapter nine, "The Church is a Happening", seems especially important. The church is both ministry and community, the one being completely inseparable from the other. Christian unity is not expressed in uniformity or structural unions, but in communion of service and sharing. Communion is where freedom happens; it is not freedom from God, but rather a discovery of being created by God. In losing communion, we are no longer free. However, in Christ, being free is not at our disposal; when we try to make faith and community controllable without touching persons, we become slaves. Chapter ten deals with ministry which does not belong to a special caste within the church, but is a function of the whole people of God. Ruether sees the church as eschatological community at the point where it has the ability to recognise its own brokenness and limitedness; it is most universal and transcendent when it realises its own human failings. The clergy-laity split within the church is an absolutising of the original functional and charismatic service, and it must be done away with. Diakonia and koinonia are really the same thing and belong to the whole people of God. This is not to say that there is not a diversity of functions, but it does mean that the church cannot support a caste system. One might ask how Ruether sees worship and proclamation, and whether, like diakonia and koinonia, these are to be marks of the whole people of God. It is evident that she has strong feelings about liturgy and the participation of everyone in "doing worship". But the relationship of the kerygmatic function to service and community is not clearly spelled out.

Chapters eleven and twelve are very much influenced by the thinking

of Gabriel Vahanian.[17] Here, Ruether is interested in the problem of faith and culture, and in the role of Christians as image-breakers. A reawakening sense of eschatology which frees humanity to be critical might be seen as the "power of New Being which we possess as that which we are not yet, but are called to become--that destiny which lies ever ahead of us, and so pulls the foundations from under all finalised historical orders and systems, restoring to us the freedom for authentic historicity."[18]

2. Communion Is Life Together

This book was published in 1968, for children, and was used in Ruether's "home parish" of St. Stephen's and the Incarnation in Washington, D. C. It is interesting because it expresses in a simple way many of the ideas which Ruether develops elsewhere. By noting what she thinks it is important to teach children, one can learn a good deal about what she sees as central to her own belief.

The opening scene is homely and informal in its presentation of the eucharist. There is stress on the family aspect of this meal, but also on the good gifts of God. The atmosphere is one of thanks for good creation and human community; it is a celebration of the happiness of being together. As one would expect from The Church Against Itself,

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[17] See especially Gabriel Vahanian, Wait Without Idols. New York: G. Braziller, 1964. Also, The Death of God: The Culture of Our Post-Christian Era. New York: G. Braziller, 1961, and No Other God. New York: G. Braziller, 1966.

[18] The Church Against Itself, p. 210.

there is no linking of communion with sacrifice or the death of Christ. Ruether's fascination with liturgy is apparent in her use of the second century communion prayer as well as her use of simple contemporary songs that the black children of St. Stephen's would know well or could easily learn.

A child's question (reminiscent of the Jewish passover) about the why and the who of the celebration meal launches the story of God's people. God's love for his people is declared through the creation, the covenant, and the exodus. Ruether makes it clearly existential: "God has brought not only our fathers, but us too and all men out of slavery into freedom".[19] Only after God's love and care are clearly dealt with does Ruether turn and talk about the people's disobedience. Only in the context of God's love can the horribleness of humanity's rebellion be understood. Disobedience is that the people preferred slavery to freedom, and the murmuring of the ungrateful people in the desert and the golden calf are used to encapsulate this concept. The story of Eden is given as another illustration of humanity's disobedience. The prophets emerge as those who called the people back to God's covenant and also proclaimed that God still loved them and held out a promise for them. Jesus is presented as one different from all the others because "he was such a free man", who "didn't bow down to other men".[20] Jesus talked

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[19]Rosemary Ruether, Communion Is Life Together. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968. p. 21.

[20]Ibid., p. 35.

about how it would be in the Kingdom; "he acted as though his will were God's will".[21] Ruether attributes responsibility for the crucifixion to the Romans, though it was facilitated by the betrayal on the part of the rulers of the people. It is worth noting that she does not mention the Jews in connection with the crucifixion: apparently she has already developed some of the sensibility towards anti-Semitism that led her later to write Faith and Fratricide. The resurrection is where "God showed that he was with Jesus by raising Jesus from the dead."[22] Ruether explains that Jesus is the Son of God and that his words are the same as God's. She also says that Jesus is the leader of God's Kingdom. But she does not say that Jesus is God. One is left with a certain vagueness about Ruether's christological position. The Christ, leader of God's Kingdom, is to be found "wherever people need some help and love".[23]

The prominence of Ruether's interest in the new creation, the promised and coming Kingdom of God, is shown in her devoting an entire chapter to it. It appears to be really the climax of the book with its promises of a new day where all wrongs are righted and all bad things swept away. God is working to bring all people into the good land of his promise. In this there is a universalist ring. Ruether claims the promise of new creation for all people. The messianic banquet of all of God's people is the symbolic high point of this chapter.

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[21] Ibid., p. 35.

[22] Ibid., p. 38.

[23] Ibid., p. 39.

The concluding chapter seems to anticipate a child's natural reaction to the glorious promise of God's Kingdom. Why don't we see more signs of God's Kingdom in life around us? Again we are reminded of humanity's disobedience, this time tied down in the realities of racism and class conflict of which children in downtown Washington would be keenly aware. We are told that God still loves us, still sends to us prophets to call us back. Much of Ruether's belief is summed up in these words:

> "We believe that God has created all men
> and made a covenant with them.
> Whenever men stand up against evil,
> God's Kingdom is already there;
> Whenever men love each other,
> God's promise comes true.
> God does not give up on us,
> So we must not give up on each other."[24]

3. Communion (parent-teacher manual with record)

This teaching aid followed the publication of the pupil's book, Communion Is Life Together, after an interval of five years. It is more or less an explanation of the pupil's book in adult language. It deals with the same themes, adding some practical suggestions, and several models for liturgy at various kinds of celebration meals. In these, one sees clearly the frequent use of Passover symbolism. Ruether explains her presentation of Jesus as a simple one, showing Jesus as a man rather than in terms of metaphysical christology. This, she explains, is so that the children can first of all experience Jesus as

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[24]Ibid., p. 47.

their friend and brother; an understanding of Jesus as incarnation of the word of God might later arise out of this initial understanding of Jesus as a human being.[25]

4. Gregory of Nazianzus

Rosemary Ruether is not primarily concerned with the concept of freedom in Gregory of Nazianzus, which is basically the fruit of her doctoral research in patristics and classics at Claremont Graduate School. She is rather dealing with other considerations such as the tension between rhetor and philosopher in the person of this fourth century Cappadocian father. She is preoccupied with the ancient rivalry between the active political life and the contemplative philosopher's style of being, as well as with the tensions between Christianity and culture in a very crucial period of the development of Christian thought and practice. Freedom is not a main theme in this work; yet Ruether touches on certain areas which are later to be drawn into her developing theology of liberation.

In the introduction, Ruether mentions the Stoics and Cynics for whom the goal was freedom, but who defined freedom in terms of apatheia, detachment from the external world because one is unable to control one's own destiny. The philosophic non-involvement meant individual withdrawal from the political arena and community. Such an understanding, current in fourth century philosophical thought, contradicted the earlier concept of worth as arete, which implied political activity. Even in the time

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[25] Rosemary Ruether, Communion. New York: Herder and Herder, 1973.

of Plato, there had been tension between political action and philosophy which Plato tried to combine in his describing of an ideal world. But Greek philosophy developed in a mystical and ascetic way toward a belief in a dyarchy of body and spirit. By the time of Marcus Aurelius (121-180 A.D.), dualistic, otherworldly language was the norm in philosophy.[26] This philosophic split between body and spirit with its results is to be an important element in Ruether's theory of "what went wrong" or what freedom is not.

The first chapter, entitled "The Conflict of Cultures in Gregory's Life", is mainly biography. The tension between active and contemplative is seen clearly throughout Gregory's life, not only in his indecision, but in his being forcibly ordained by his father. Although Gregory seems to desire the freedom and solitude of no ecclesiastical responsibilities, once he has them, he gives them up to undertake the most difficult work of ministry at Constantinople. Ruether pictures the paradox of the personality of Gregory who was in theory a contemplative, but who in practice liked people. Ruether shows us Gregory's dilemma as that of the cultured Christian torn between two life-styles and two cultures. She states that theoretically he never resolved this tension, but that practically there was a rich inter-action between cultures and lifestyles.

Werner Jaeger is even more definite than Ruether about Gregory's culture conflict. He believed that in order for Christianity to become the official religion of Rome, after Constantine, there had to be a radical change. Christianity would have to have one clear doctrine and it

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[26]Rosemary R. Ruether, Gregory of Nazianzus. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969. p. 10-11.

would have to attract those who had previously found it to be "uncultured".[27] The fourth century saw considerable activity towards defining orthodoxy. Jaeger considers the Cappadocians to have had in mind a complete Christian civilization, or paideia, because, like Origen, they saw theology as the ultimate science and philosophy, the ultimate culture.[28] He suggests that the Cappadocian fathers are the ones who made possible a fusion of Christianity with everything good in Greek culture, creating a positive attitude towards classical thought that has survived until our times.[29] Jaeger sees the roots of Erasmus' humanism in the "original renaissance" or the Greek fathers' idea of a Christian form of Greek paideia.[30] But probably Jaeger was less aware than Ruether of certain negative contributions of hellenistic culture to Christian thought; he may not have considered the tendency toward a body/spirit split as something which would be destructive of the vital Jewish-Christian understanding of creation.

In chapter three, on Gregory and the philosophic life, Gregory's goals of contemplative living are developed. Apparently, the major task of the philosophic life was cleansing (katharsis):

> "It is the freeing of the image of God within man from the depressing power of matter and bringing it back to its aboriginal state as a reflection

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[27]Werner Jaeger, Early Christianity and Greek Paideia. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961. p. 70.

[28]Ibid., p. 74.

[29]Ibid., p. 75.

[30]Ibid., p. 101.

of the divine archetype."[31]

This idea of katharsis as the separation of the soul from the body is like that of Origen.[32] It is influenced by Plato's idea of withdrawal from the visible to the invisible.[33] For Gregory, there is a problem, because, under the influence of Platonism, he saw freedom as being freedom from the body to know God above, yet at the same time he was also influenced by Jewish eschatology which places freedom not above but in the future.[34] For Gregory, biblical thought and Platonism never quite managed to fit smoothly together, although he continued his work of adaptation.[35] The Cappadocians seem to have been torn between gnostic dualism and biblical faith. While Gregory seems to think of the body as evil, he still praises nature and even the marvellous construction of the body. Probably he thought that it was "fleshly will" which was evil rather than the actual physical body. Gregory thought that it was possible to combine the married and the 'virginal life' because he defines virginity as apatheia, non-involvement, rather than merely a physical state. "Virginity" while married was living "as if not" caught up in things of this world.[36] Political activity is basically bad and an obstacle to be overcome. Since, in his time, to be

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[31] Ruether, Gregory of Nazianzus, p. 136.

[32] Ibid., p. 146.

[33] Ibid., p. 149.

[34] Ibid., p. 151.

[35] Ibid., pp.154-155.

[36] Ibid., p. 140.

a bishop was also to be a politician, the monastic ideal was to be detached from clerical responsibility.[37] All of his life, Gregory wavered between his own wishes for contemplative withdrawal and the church's demands for his service; Ruether sees this as a living out of a certain philosophic dilemma.[38]

5. The Radical Kingdom: The Western Experience of Messianic Hope

Ruether states in the introduction that the Radical Kingdom is a book about the relation of social change and the Christian faith. Both, Ruether says, are talking about redemption in a non-individualistic sense. Redemption, in this sense, can be equated with liberation as the rescuing of humanity from its predicament. Likewise, freedom (which one might call salvation) is the goal of this liberation/redemption. Therefore it is possible to say that The Radical Kingdom has something to say about freedom and liberation, even although these words are not explicitly used.[39]

In the introduction, Ruether discusses three types of relationship between social change and faith: the apocalyptic type, the inward journey, and evolutionary progress. Evolutionary progress has been the predominant view of ecclesiology and theology since the early Catholic period with its crisis reaction to the non-appearance of the eschaton.

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[37] Ibid., p. 145.

[38] Ibid., p. 146.

[39] Rosemary Ruether, The Radical Kingdom. New York: Paulist Press, 1970. p. 1-3.

Ruether feels that Christianity can only be understood as social revolution as we emerge from the era-of-the-church into post-Christendom. Only as the Christian message (which, she says, is implicitly revolutionary) is released from its ecclesiastical captivity through secularisation can a sense of historical expectation be recovered. Today, eschatology is the concept of the moment, not only in theological circles, but in the secular ideologies which proclaim historical hope for humanity. The apocalyptic view of redemption is one that is at home in our age: it is one which in faith sees social revolution as oriented by future hope. One could ask how far Ruether feels it necessary to be rescued from the ecclesiastical institution in order to experience redemption. Although the apocalyptic-radical type of expectation has been scarce until very recently, it was not altogether absent throughout the centuries of the 'era-of-the-church'. Messianic expectation was an underground stream of thinking that surfaced briefly from time to time.[40]

Part I of The Radical Kingdom is a series of studies of various historical movements, both Christian and secular, which have carried with them the historical expectation of apocalyptic-type thought. Ruether treats each topic fairly separately, giving the impression of a series of lectures on related subjects rather than different aspects of an interrelated whole. Probably she could have attached each topic more clearly to the central theme which she articulates in the introduction: the interrelation between Christian faith and social change,

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[40] Ibid., pp.1-18.

understanding both as redemption (or in our terms, liberation). Partly for this reason, most of Part I seems a bit wooden with occasional vitality as when she discusses the radicals of the reformation or notes that Rauschenbush saw the close connection between redemption and freedom,[41] the "social gospel" being the establisher of the idea that the gospel had a transforming mission to all humanity in terms of the wholeness of life;[42] or as when she points to the unanswered question of Marx, "How does it happen that man alienates his own labour?" as still the key to the connection between spiritual/psychological alienation and economic/political alienation.[43]

The high point of The Radical Kingdom is Part II. Here, Ruether devotes six chapters to various modes of theological reflection on modern society. Without a doubt, Ruether is at her best as a theologian in touch with the modern world rather than as a historian. Sometimes it is difficult to separate Ruether from the various points of view discussed, although she remains critical in her evaluation of even her most enthusiastic subjects. Although not without appreciation for 'crisis theology', Ruether writes most convincingly about secular theology, the theology of Gabriel Vahanian, Marxist-Christian dialogue, and the theology of hope.

Ruether's preoccupation with ecclesiology comes through in her discussion of secular theology. She sees secular theology's greatest

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[41] Ibid., p. 85.

[42] Ibid., p. 91.

[43] Ibid., p. 109.

impact in the study of the meaning of the church. Secular theology makes the effort to move the church out of rigid positions and challenges Christians to ask how they can be a community of the New Creation amidst the realities.[44] Secular theology wants to see the dissolving of boundaries between church and world, thus recovering the biblical sense of the gospel as something for the whole of life.[45] Radical interest in creation is implicit in secular theology as it seeks to break down sacralism, rigid social structures and the influences of hellenistic gnostic thought. Creation is directly related to redemption (i.e. to liberation), since redemption is the restoring and renewing of creation (which is not at all the same thing as "the world"). Freedom, then, is realised as humanity is restored to creation, to finitude as creature and to openness to the challenges of the gospel. The ecclesiastical community is only one place where by grace the church might be happening; it is the task of the liberating people of God to join God's mission wherever that might be going on, dissolving the walls of the institution and celebrating God's presence in all the world.[46]

Gabriel Vahanian's work occupies a prominent place in The Radical Kingdom as it did in The Church Against Itself. Vahanian sees the real choice as not that between belief and unbelief, since persons are incurably theistic, but between idolatry and iconoclasm. For him, liberation is the constant breaking out of tired vehicles to new ways

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[44] Ibid., p. 158.

[45] Ibid., p. 162.

[46] Ibid., p. 166.

of saying something about God's transcendent presence. Ruether accepts the iconoclastic task as valid, but notes that this constant destruction and remaking leaves no finality or permanence. As with all dialectical theology, there is a problem because ultimate synthesis is forbidden. Even Vahanian's theory of liberation-by-iconoclasm does not satisfy Ruether completely.[47] Interestingly, Ruether feels that it is the Christian-Marxist dialogue which has helped theology to move away from perpetual and non-permanent static dialectic to a more action-oriented theology.[48]

Moltmann's theology of hope has its sources in Teilhard de Chardin and Bloch according to Ruether. The reality of God is not above the world, but yet to come. Messianic perspective is not an escape, but a call to commitment to history itself; salvation (i.e. freedom) is sought by the real historical task of transforming that which is. It is in the midst of struggle that we find faith, hope, love. This struggle is not just dialectic, but synthesis.[49] Yet Moltmann, according to Ruether, never <u>really</u> gets beyond the problem of the shape of a consummation; a synthesis of God and humanity--this remains unimaginable. Ruether, returning to Teilhard de Chardin, sees this consummation as the impossible possibility--the transformation of human nature as we know it. The resurrection from the dead points us to the radically new possibility of New Creation which surpasses all the impossibilities of old creation.

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[47] Ibid., Chapter ten.

[48] Ibid., p. 200.

[49] Ibid., p. 217.

Humanity will, at its point of highest fulfilment, cease being humanity and begin being something totally different, the synthesis of God and humanity.[50] God is described as 'the future of man', not a static ontological being, but one who comes and is becoming.

Part III of The Radical Kingdom, although interesting, comes as an anti-climax. It deals with contemporary American social movements at close range. Ruether is at home talking about Marcuse as the "guru" of the New Left. Following Marcuse, she observes that "new expressions of freedom are needed to correspond to present capacities and forms of domination".[51] What freedom means in practice will look different in each new era of domination. She sees also with Marcuse the dilemma of revolutionaries: how to reconcile the apparent contradictions between external necessity and the inner liberation of self. Here she sees a hint of a solution in Marx: "perhaps the continuous attraction of Marxism lies in its insistence that the two must ultimately go together, and that the authentic conquest of necessity must also be the inner liberation of self." Freedom (or salvation), as Ruether seems to understand it, is both economic/political and spiritual/psychological.

Ruether's conclusion is a comment on the tension within revolutionary mythology between practical change and ultimate vision. Both must be present. Otherwise, unpractical vision will lead to bitter frustration or visionless practice will turn into unself-critical self-absolutizing.

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[50] Ibid., p. 218.

[51] Ibid., p. 278.

Vision is necessary in order to be critical of accomplishments which are always partial; in some way, the dream must become flesh to stay alive. Humanity has need of both practice and vision: "Man by his nature is a paradoxical fusion of infinite aspiration and finite possibility--To confine him to finite possibility, bowed down before the vision of the infinite as a nature alien to himself, is to deny him one of his essential dimensions and to consign him to death."[52] Freedom (or salvation) is the result of both practical task and visionary promise. Yet, in this life, in this historical humanity, the ultimate goal of freedom (or salvation) is never fully realised. Amidst the struggle we stand closest to each other and experience a foretaste of the age to come. As the struggling messianic community "... one lays hold of this vision as the deepest moral certitude of one's life, notwithstanding that its practical possibility remains shrouded in the deepest uncertainty."[53]

The introduction and conclusion of The Radical Kingdom speak more about freedom than the rest of this book. The book might have benefited from better integration into the theme of social change as redemption, announced in the introduction. The connection between its different sections might have been made more decisively. It is easy to see from this book why Ruether later went on to her interest in liberation theology. This is adumbrated in her appraisal of Marxism as well as in her treatment of the theology of hope and of secular theology. Many of the themes

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[52] Ibid., p. 287.

[53] Ibid., p. 288.

that come up here will re-emerge as she turns to feminist theology. Here we see freedom (or salvation) as new creation, the messianic break-in of God as human future through God's grace and humanity's struggle.

6. Liberation Theology: Human Hope Confronts Christian History and American Power.

Liberation Theology, published in 1972, shows Rosemary Ruether as a liberation theologian with a special interest in feminist theology. Until now, she has merely been tending in this direction as a radical thinker with keen social concern. This is not really a book; it is rather, by Ruether's admission, a collection of essays (a number of them previously published during the seventies) on the theme of liberation. But since Ruether has seen fit not only to write a number of articles on this theme, but to gather them together under this title, she is clearly putting herself in the camp of liberation theology thinkers. In addition, Ruether's preoccupation with the woman question is sharpened and focused in a new way. Ruether is never exclusively a "feminist theologian"; but in Liberation Theology, she articulates her pro-woman thoughts and feelings strongly and clearly.

Ruether's opening chapter is probably the most important, because it sets out her presuppositions and preoccupations in liberation theology. Chapter two is also about Ruether's general approach to liberation thinking, using Christian origins and Christian tradition to illuminate today's dilemma. The remaining essays deal with specific aspects of liberation: perspectives on human community, Jewish-Christian

relations, women, blacks, ecology, and Latin American theology.

What freedom means is the main theme of the first chapter of Liberation Theology. Reflection on liberation is a multi-disciplinary matter demanding team work around the focal point of theological inquiry. Theological questions basically deal with the tension between ought and is, the relationship of the transcendent to present reality. Freedom, according to Ruether, is sheer gift: "Liberation begins in a gratuitous mystery of freedom that happens within our situation, yet beyond the capacities of the alienated situation itself."[54] We do not deserve freedom, but because we are given it by grace, we can affirm it against all oppressive systems. Repentence is recognising this transcendent gift of freedom and refusing to identify with the false reality of the oppressive structures. The gift of freedom is completely alien to 'this world' of powers and principalities, but it is not alien to our nature. Liberation (redemption) is the restoration of persons to their true selves as creatures, and to awareness of God's gift of freedom to them.[55]

Also, in chapter one, Ruether states that she feels that liberation theology must be delivered from dualities. The oppressor-oppressed categories, drawn from Marxist thinking, can be an over-simplified and truth-destroying polarization. Although the oppressor-oppressed perspective is often most helpful, one must move beyond

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[54]Rosemary Ruether, Liberation Theology. New York: Paulist Press, 1972. p. 9.

[55]Ibid., chapter one, pp. 1-22.

these terms to universal humanity.[56] Theology, says Ruether, is no longer an ecclesiastical prisoner, but is finding its place within the whole human scene. Everywhere there is a need for a transcendent prophetic challenge of oughtness to counter secularism's ratification of the way things are.[57]

In chapter two, Ruether suggests that our contemporary crisis of faith in "objective scientific philosophy" puts us in a situation similar to that of the early Christian period. Therefore, studies of gnosticism and apocalyptic are relevant to our own time. Ruether sees withdrawal of a gnostic type within our culture (drugs, sex, etc.) and she clearly condemns this escapism. Transcendence must not be used falsely either to justify the status quo or to provide an escape zone apart from society. Transcendence can only be authentic on the prophetic approach: the prophet stands within society and yet stands over against all systems. Ruether sees need for transcendence, but not for otherworldliness. She sees the hard realities of the contemporary situation, but she believes in good creation. For her, "wholeness" or freedom is a unity of dualisms, and a synthesis of Bultmannian "immanent transcendence" with the "not yet" of Moltmann.[58]

In chapters three and four, Ruether has a look at the question of celibacy. The original reasons for celibacy as a life style enabling an

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[56]For support on this point from a black feminist, see Pauli Murray, "Black, Feminist Theologies: Links, Parallels and Tensions", Christianity & Crisis, April 14, 1980, Vol. 40, No. 6, pp. 93-95.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid., Chapter 2, pp. 23-38.

intensified human community of risk and promise have been forgotten and negated as celibate institutions have come to stand for security and ecclesiastical convenience. Ruether opposes a celibacy based on a rationale hostile to human sexuality which is the alienating result of a combination of Jewish apocalypticism with Greek philosophical dualism.[59] Such a rationale is one of mortification, a kind of death ethic which is not compatible with hopeful belief in the goodness of all created life. Today, with the traditional celibate institutions as well as traditional nuclear family marriage in crisis, there is more need than ever for fuller human community between men and women which integrates mission, friendship, growth, and contemplation. New forms are needed for personalist, non-sexist, loving, and responsible sexual relationships. While she does not throw out the institutions of marriage and religious orders entirely, Ruether urges mutual transformation in order that persons might be supported and active in mission in an unstable confusing world.[60]

The Jewish-Christian problem is considered in chapters five and six. Again, dualism is the culprit behind anti-semitism. But new hope for creative Jewish-Christian dialogue is present in contemponary theology. The Jewish insight of wholeness, of a universalist hope that includes particularist significance, can be helpful in healing the split in Western thinking. Today Christians are rethinking what it means to say "Jesus is Christ" and turning from a fulfilled messianism to a hope for the messiah who is yet to come again. It has been the Christian theo-

[59] Ibid., p. 54.

[60] Ibid., chapter three, p. 39-50.

logy of fulfilled messianism which has created the Jewish ghetto. Ruether will deal with this question at greater length in her next book, Faith and Fratricide.[61]

In chapters seven and eight, Ruether deals with feminist theology. In chapter seven, she uses her dualism theory to explain Christian misogynism. The Christian dread of woman is tied in with the larger suspicion of the body, sex, reproduction, and all things physical. Women are saved, it seemed to certain of our Christian predecessors, by virtually ceasing to function as females--only through virginity would a woman become a spiritual being like the male. The basically good longing for transcendence must regain the health and wholeness of a positive attitude toward creation and incarnation.[62] Chapter eight is particularly important because it demonstrates the significance of the women's revolution in relation to other revolutions. In several ways, the women's movement is a focal point. First, the underlying male/female split and alienation sums up and acts as a paradigm for many other dualistic alienations. Second, the women's revolution is at the centre between two apparently opposing revolutionary forces: the socio-economic struggles of the have-nots for political, material, and spiritual independence and the surge towards self-fulfilment and an improved ecological quality of life by those in technologically

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[61] Ibid., chapters five and six, pp. 65-94. Warren F. Gross, in his review of Liberation Theology is critical of the inadequate supportive reasoning for certain theological assertions, particularly those touching on Christology. See Christian Century, January 23, 1974, Vol. XCI, No. 3, pp. 78-79.

[62] Ibid., chapter seven, pp. 95-114.

developed societies. Women might well have unique possibilities as reconcilers and spokespersons for new humanity. Women do not make their contribution merely by integrating themselves into the male power system, but rather through using their communal resources for doing away with the total pattern of domination and erecting a new social ethic. The goal for women is not simply more power for themselves, but a new, diversely cooperative way of being human.[63]

Black theology is the theme of chapter nine. But a number of the issues discussed here are relevant to other types of liberation theology. Ruether rightly says that black theology walks the razor's edge between being reverse-racist and authentically prophetic. This is true of any type of contextual theology which must be genuinely particularist while being also more humanly universalist. Authentic rebellion is a breaking of the silence which separates us, by means of an angry recognition of our own humanity and therefore of our common human nature. Black theology, like any contextual theology, can help everyone to understand more concretely what we mean by such abstracts as sin, redemption, power.[64]

Community is again the theme of chapter ten, with the stress this time on the imperative necessity in the technological world of the emergence of new ways of communitarian socialism. Ruether points out the numerous similarities between left-wing socialism and the radical reformation, participatory democracy being the key note of both. Radical community cannot be an end in itself; it is rather a method and means of lib-

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[63]Ibid., chapter eight, pp. 115-126.

[64]Ibid., chapter nine, pp. 127-144.

eration for the redeeming of the world.[65]

Ruether returns to the problem of the proper rôle of the white American "left" in chapter eleven. She sees that the hitherto unrealised possibilities of converting 'Middle America' to the left lie in appealing to their stubborn values of localism and non-intervention. These conservative-sounding ideals are now also radical in the sense that they involve participatory democracy and disenchantment with world domination by American power. Radicals must learn to be more flexible in dealing with the two levels of revolutionary tension, the conventional and the utopian. Ruether sees the need for both the radical, with his transcendent vision, and the liberal, who is in touch with pragmatic power, and she sees the dangers of collision between the two as well as the enormous possibilities for good as the result of creative radical-liberal coalition. Ruether once more says that social change and theology are really about the same questions--human nature, grace, conversion, salvation. Theology speaks the transcendent language of 'oughtness', and this vision of how things must become is necessary for any social change.[66]

In the final chapter, Ruether deals with Latin American liberation theology as well as taking up the challenge of a new global unity through each particular group's self-realisation. In Latin America, not only is there a confrontation between messianic faith and the Constantinian church, but also between the Christian West and anti-neo-colonialism.

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[65] Ibid., chapter ten, pp. 145-156.

[66] Ibid., chapter eleven, pp. 157-174.

Christians must see God as the Redeemer of all people, and learn to recognise messianic activity in forms, faiths, and situations very different from their own. This need not create doubt, but rather support the hope we have in Jesus, our Messiah.[67]

7. Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions

Religion and Sexism is a book made up of articles edited by Rosemary Ruether, and published in 1974. Ruether writes a brief preface and one chapter, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church". The purpose of the book is not to tell what women are really like, but rather to trace the religious history of the distortion of the likeness of humankind, particularly in regard to woman. While economic/political as well as psychological analysis of the subjugation of woman is meaningful, religion is also vital for an understanding of the cultural meaning of woman's oppression. While all religion uses sexual imagery, the Judao-Christian tradition has a particularly male-centred and patriarchal strain to it. The essays in this book are written by scholars in various areas of historical theology, and trace the relationship of patriarchal religion to the oppression of woman.[68]

Ruether's particular contribution to this volume is in keeping with her interest and expertise in patristics. She notes that the Church

[67]Ibid., chapter twelve,pp. 175-193.

[68]Rosemary R. Ruether, (ed), Religion and Sexism. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974. Preface, pp. 9-10.

fathers were not unmitigated in their condemnation of women--in fact, they sing high praises of the emerging "virgins". This is not really contradictory; we have here two sides of the patristic understanding of humankind. Hellenism alone is not to blame for the dualistic thinking that warped hebraic wholeness and naturalism. All religions were passing into an alienated, world-negating phase during the epoch of the nascence of Christianity. The Christian faith picked up dualistic tendencies from more than one source and these were inevitably in conflict with the wholistic hebraic belief in the goodness of creation. Although the Church condemned gnosticism, it did not establish the unity between creation and redemption in a very satisfactory way; the adoption of a 'cosmological christology' left Christianity with a rather non-concrete preoccupation with otherworldliness.[69]

Ruether treats patristic problems in dealing with the concept of the image of God in which humankind is made. It is not women as such, but female sexuality, which is the root of both patristic misogyny and praise of virginity. Sex and marriage were also debased and depersonalised by patristic abhorrence of bodiliness. Never do the fathers understand physical affection as a means of expressing personal relationship. Today we need to look again at the striving for transcendence and spiritual personhood that the ascetic tradition represented for women; and we need to appreciate that this striving was paid for at the cost of men's natural affection and woman's natural humanity. We need to take the achievements of this tradition and unite them with a revitalised

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[69]Ruether, "Virginal Feminism and the Fathers of the Church", pp. 150-153.

sense of good creation and of the meaning of the incarnation. In this essay, Ruether reveals once more her belief that freedom is wholeness, and the overcoming of the dualism. She brings in the themes of creation and redemption and sees that unity between them is essential and that this unity must be one true to hebraic wholeness.[70]

8. Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism

Faith and Fratricide, published in 1974, is a careful and scholarly search for the roots of anti-Semitism, a search which begins with pre-Christian background and carries through to the holocaust and the present day.[71] Ruether is here again primarily a historian as she examines the New Testament, the fathers, and centuries of Christian history for indications of anti-Semitism. But, the questions she raises in this book are profoundly theological; she emerges asking whether the most basic assumptions of Christian doctrine can possibly be anything but anti-Judaic. Ruether says that it is possible to have a positive attitude towards Judaism as a Christian, but in examining the sources of anti-Semitism, it becomes clear that a complete re-evaluation of Christian understanding, particularly of Christology, is called for. In Faith and Fratricide, amidst the historical details and, in fact, because of them, Ruether's basic position as a theologian comes more clearly into focus.

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[70] Ibid., pp. 153-179.

[71] Several writers such as James Parkes and John C. Meagher have, however, criticized Ruether's insufficient carefulness here and her lack of scholarly precision and accuracy. See Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity, (ed) Alan Davies. New York: Paulist Press, 1979. p. 2 and p. 10.

There is little here that is directly on the theme of freedom. Yet, in a deeper sense, the whole book is an enquiry into the making of slavery. In studying the roots of prejudice and persecution, Ruether is searching for the theological underpinnings of non-freedom. Her suggestions about how one must understand Jesus anew are ones which involve concepts of wholeness and freedom not only for Jewish people, but for all people. For behind the slavery-producing dualisms is a historical crisis and a basic theological misunderstanding. Fulfilled messianism is the culprit; the delay of the imminent parousia is the situation. Ruether, in fact, suggests that the Church "got it wrong" nearly from the beginning. There is, however, still a gospel to be "got right".[72]

This book consists of five chapters and a rather lengthy and enlightening introduction by Gregory Baum. Ruether logically and clearly deals with the Greek and Jewish sources of anti-Judaism (chapter 1), the rejection of the Jews in the New Testament itself (chapter 2), the further negation of the Jews in the patristic era (chapter 3) and the history of anti-Semitism up to the present day (chapter 4). Lastly, she offers a theological critique of the underpinnings of the traditional Christian hatred and misunderstanding of Judaism and the Jews. This last chapter is, theologically speaking, with Baum's introduction, the most significant. Its conclusions are of relevance to more than just the Jewish question.[73]

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[72]Rosemary R. Ruether, Faith and Fratricide. New York: Seabury Press, 1974.

[73]Ibid.

In his introduction to Faith and Fratricide, Gregory Baum not only informs us of the context in which this book was written and helps us to see the significance of its basic questions, but also summarizes its important themes. Faith and Fratricide is a part of the post-holocaust enquiry into the causes of anti-Semitism and an expression of the desire since Vatican II for Jewish-Christian dialogue and rapprochement. Because of the holocaust, the question must be raised whether it is possible to 'purify' Christianity of its anti-Semitism. The answer cannot be found in the Bible and in tradition alone, but must be reached as a creative process in which the gospel is found anew in the present age. Baum echoes Ruether in stating that Christology is the heart of the problem. The affirmation that Jesus is the Christ means that those who did not recognise Jesus' messiahship must be wrong. This 'left-hand' of Christology created the suspicion which grew until the holocaust was possible. To remove anti-Semitism means to remove its source, the left-hand of Christology which condemns those who would deny that Jesus is the promised one of the scriptures. Not only has this been responsible for anti-Semitism, but it has paved the way for the disregard of alternative identities and histories by a culturally dominant, absolutist Christendom. Yet we cannot abandon entirely the claim of absolute truth, for if we did, we would have no transcendent standpoint from which to speak of liberation or to know evil in the world for what it is. Rosemary Ruether relativises Christian claims by stressing the second coming and the eschatological perspective, and by affirming that Jesus is fully the Christ only at the end of time. The Jews had expected a more visible messianic age and they are right

in holding that the Kingdom has not completely arrived as long as human misery prevails. The Jews rightly reject fulfilled messianism which is the cause of all religious imperialism and Ruether sees the Jewish refusal as a call to Christians to recognise fully the suffering and injustice in the present.[74]

Ruether's first chapter is entitled, "The Greek and Jewish Roots of the Negative Myth of the Jews". She does not think that Greek or pagan anti-Judaism was much of a factor in Christian anti-Judaism.[75] Christian anti-Semitism was a new thing based on a theological source. Ruether studies developments within Judaism in the inter-testamental period. She explores universalising and spiritualising tensions in Hellenistic Judaism, prophetic and messianic tensions in sectarian Judaism, the diabolising of the Jewish God in Jewish gnosticism, and the Pharisaic reaction to Hellenistic and sectarian Judaism. Ruether sees a possible source of anti-Semitism in the acute alienation that produced both apocalyticism and gnosticism. The traditional symbols of faith had collapsed under the tension created by Hellenism, and in the malaise the world and its creator were perceived as evil while people looked hopefully beyond all the failing symbols and known realities in search of an utterly transcendent God. It is the disappointment and despair of the Jewish fringe that gave rise

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[74]Gregory Baum, Ibid., Introduction, pp. 1-22.

[75]Alan Davies feels that Ruether underestimates the importance of secular anti-Semitism which is not rooted in Christianity. Also, John C. Meagher thinks that Ruether does not fully appreciate the contribution of the Greco-Roman world to modern anti-Semitism. See Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity. (ed) Alan Davies. New York: Paulist press, 1979. pp. 198-203 and p. 11.

to the dualisms which were repudiated by both the fathers and Jewish orthodoxy, but which nevertheless had so much influence on western thought and prejudices.[76]

The rejection of the Jews in the New Testament is the topic of chapter two. Ruether states that in the synoptics, anti-Judaic interpretation grew out of the church's messianic interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures.[77] The first Christian theology was the Christological interpretation of Jewish scriptures. It was the crucifixion experience which necessitated a faith decision concerning who Jesus was; to most eyes, death was the end, but the disciples had an extraordinary experience of new understanding and new beginning. The Kingdom had been postponed, but not denied by Jesus' death. The disciples immediately began their search of the scriptures in order to back up their experience. They hoped that Judaism would join them in their new understanding of the scriptures; when the Jews did not respond, the disciples viewed their main rivals, the Pharisees, with hostility.[78]

The continuing patristic development of anti-Judaism such as had already begun in the New Testament is the subject of chapter four. The

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[76]Rosemary Ruether, Ibid.,chapter one, pp. 23-63.

[77]Douglas R. A. Hare would take issue with Ruether here. He sees a parallel development of messianic interpretation and anti-Judaism rather than the one growing out of the other. This being so, he sees no essential relationship between anti-Judaism and Christology. See "The Rejection of the Jews in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts". Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity (ed) Alan Davies. New York: Paulist Press, 1979. p. 276.

[78]Rosemary Ruether, Ibid.,chapter two, pp. 64-113.

adversus Judaeos tradition is the main source for the attitudes of the fathers. This tradition is mainly a collection of texts tending to substantiate Christology on the one hand and the blindness of the Jews on the other. The church became, by the time of Chrysostom, intent on cutting itself off from its Jewish roots.[79]

In chapter four, Ruether examines how the theological tradition of anti-Judaism is translated into legal and social discrimination after the Constantinian settlement, and then, after the nineteenth century emancipation, how this tradition is transcribed into racial anti-Semitism. Hitler gathered together the heritage of religious and social hatred, adding to it racial theory. He diverted pent-up anxiety about the changes in society onto the Jews. First, anti-Jewish laws were reasserted, then, after emigration was closed by war, genocide became the 'final solution'. Today, Israel is seen by some as the end of the problem, but again here there is conflict as another nation is turned aside to make room for the returning Israel. Even today's Israel is far from the promised messianic land of ultimate peace and justice for all the people.[80]

Ruether's concluding chapter on the theological critique of the Christian anti-Judaic myth is important. She restates her basic premise

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[79] Ibid., chapter three, pp. 114-182.

[80] Ibid., chapter four, pp. 183-225. For further discussion of Zionism, see: Rosemary & Herman Ruether, "The General Assembly Vote: Zionism and Racism" Christianity and Crisis, December 22, 1975, vol. 35, no. 21, p. 3076. Critical remarks on Ruether's position can be found in Edmund R. Hanauer, "Continuing The Discussion: Zionism and Racism" Christianity and Crisis, April 12, 1976, vol. 36, p. 81.

that anti-Judaic elements are not secondary to Christianity, but that Christology and anti-Judaism have been intertwined from the beginning. She also believes that we are now in a new historical situation which makes re-thinking both possible and necessary: the end of Christendom means that Christianity is now a diaspora faith; Israel means that Jews now have a homeland as well as diaspora. Since anti-Judaism is not just surface polemic, but also Christian affirmation, questioning will not be easy; indeed, the task is really one of theological reconstruction.[81]

Ruether now turns to examine several schisms of understanding, or false antitheses, in Christian theology which must be dealt with by any such reconstruction. First, there is the schism of judgement and promise. Christian theology has divided prophecy into anti-Judaic judgement and Christological hope. This is a profound misunderstanding of prophetic dialectics which address both self-judgement and promise to the same community. This division destroys the meaning of prophecy, leading not only to unremitted condemnation of Judaism, but to an inability of Christianity to be self-critical. Secondly, there is the schism of particularism and universalism. Christian theology has identified Judaism with a narrow particularism while seeing itself as the universal salvation for all peoples. The pseudo-universalism of Greco-Roman culture meshed with Christianity to form an intolerance of any who would maintain their own culture. Fulfilled messianism and the resulting Christian imperialism have not taken seriously the histories and identities of independent peoples. Thirdly, there is the schism of letter

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[81] Ibid., chapter five, pp. 226-261.

and spirit: Christian theology, in linking Judaism with outwardness, has believed in the triumph of an inward and spiritual Christianity. Christian theology has misunderstood that law and spirit are not antitheses, but should be two sides of God's presence in everyday life. In practice, Ruether feels that Christianity boils down to a religion of grace and good works that is very similar to Judaism. Because Jews preserve the original meaning of the word messiah, they cannot, however, accept Jesus as Christ when the times are still unredeemed. Ruether feels that this Great Refusal of the Jews points to the basic error of fulfilled messianism. Ruether sees Christology as the key issue, not only as regards the question of anti-Judaism, but in connection with the whole meaning of the Christian faith.[82]

Ruether suggests ways that education and dialogue can help in the creation of a new relationship between Jews and Christians. New Jewish consciousness will mean rethinking Christian identity, and it is uncertain exactly what this will look like. Certainly, Christology would undergo relativising and Judaism would still be see as true Israel. There would be room for a number of perspectives and one would come to acknowledge that the God who creates many peoples allows many ways to the Father.[83]

Perhaps the most significant part of this book is what it says about a re-evaluation of the basic Christian affirmation. Ruether courageously

[82] Ibid. See also: Ruether, "Christology and Jewish-Christian Relations", To Change The World, London: SCM, 1981. Chapter III. This is a later re-statement of these ideas. Likewise: "The Question of Jewish-Christian Relations", Disputed Questions, Nashville, 1982, Chapter 2.

[83] Ibid.

suggests that what is wrong in Christian society is deeply rooted in the most fundamental Christian affirmation that "Jesus is the Christ". Ruether wants to relativise the meaning of that affirmation; but she does not want to empty it of transcendence or make it less than the absolute criterion of our actions. Ruether seems to preserve a deep respect both for the integrity and sanctity of other peoples and faiths and for the sovereignty of God which does everything in its own way, quite apart from our limited understanding of how we think it should be done. Freedom, in order to be freedom, must mean our recognition of God's freedom-in-sovereignty. Human freedom can only mean something when it is staked to the freedom of God.[84]

9. New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation

Rosemary Ruether's New Woman, New Earth was published in 1975. It is her first published book which is primarily concerned with sexism. However, it may not have been the first to have been written, since From Machismo to Mutuality also appears to have been written in 1974, although not published until 1976. New Woman, New Earth is eight, self-contained essays which do seem to me to be more interrelated and satisfying as a whole than some of Ruether's earlier books. Much of the material in the book was developed by Ruether as the result of various lectureships held during the period 1973-75. The theme of

[84]That this book has had considerable impact is attested to by the publication of AntiSemitism and the Foundations of Christianity, (ed) Alan T. Davies. New York: Paulist Press, 1979. Davies states in the introduction that this volume is a response to the host of questions raised by Ruether: "It is Ruether's special contribution to have defined these issues in a manner that has redefined the problem itself." p.xvi.

New Woman, New Earth is the interrelation of sexism with other forms of oppression. She clearly feels that sexism must be seen as linked to other exploitations such as racism, capitalism, and the wasting of the earth's resources, in the larger system of domination and subjugation. At points, she takes contemporary feminism to task for its insufficient appreciation for the total picture of human injustice and human potentiality. Ruether is here, as always, a historical theologian, interested in tracing how things got to be the way they are. She goes beyond historical study to make numerous relevant contemporary comments.[85]

In the preface, Ruether announces the theme. Besides a study of the interdependence of sexism, racism, classism, and technological power, she hopes that readers will find here hints towards a new world. What she is saying is not to be seen as mere negative criticism, but as an attempt to point out alternatives and to inspire a renewed vision. Ruether states that her work is not unbiased--it is advocacy scholarship. This does not mean that she falsifies history, but rather that her reason for studying it is to find the sources of present difficulties. Ruether also suggests that this book will be concerned with the relationship between ideology and social structure; this question is one which must be studied further within the women's movement because consciousness-raising alone is not sufficient.[86]

Chapter one is a crucial chapter. It is basically a history of sexism, a seeking of the roots of the 'first and final cause'. Ruether

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[85]Rosemary R. Ruether, New Woman, New Earth. New York: Seabury Press, 1975.

[86]Ibid., preface, pp. xi-xiv.

rejects as unhistorical the often quoted Bachofen theory that in the days of the mother-gods, there was a matriarchal world. Ruether studies three stages of development of the oppression of women. It is necessary for liberation to be aware of these three levels and types of sexism: objectification, paranoid misogynism, romantic spiritualisation. Ruether also deals briefly with the history of the struggle for women's liberation. Freedom is seen as wholeness, in the hebraic sense of unity of body, mind, and spirit; as mutuality between women and men. Liberation must come through various levels of struggle: psychological, socio-political, prophetic self-critical, and ecological.[87]

Mariology is the subject of chapter two. This study gives us new insights into religion's use of Mary as well as the possible hidden meaning for liberation. This historical study shows us that "Mary" is not helpful to women's freedom when she merely preserves a 'type' of men's idealisation of 'the feminine'; but "Mary" can be liberating as the symbol of the new humanity, the original and final wholeness of personhood before God. Freedom here means wholeness.[88]

Ordination of women is the issue at stake in chapter three. The history of exclusion of women from the clergy is traced; Ruether stresses woman's early active rôle in ministry. Ruether also examines the symbolic structures in theology which tend to exclude women as church leaders. The dualistic image of the totally transcendent

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[87]Ibid., chapter one, pp. 3-35.

[88]Ibid., chapter two, pp. 36-62.

Father is the most influential image; Jesus tried to reinterpret 'father' in an egalitarian and non-hierarchical way. Considering the ordination question as one which is basically a human rights issue, she feels that a different feminist style of ministry is needed. The new style would be community-centred, the job of ministry being to activate rather than pacify the people. In this essay, Ruether reminds us that changes in the church's sexism will demand other changes of the most radical sort, in particular our attitude towards the domination of the earth. In chapter three, liberation takes shape as the triumph over dualism and alienation.[89]

Witches and Jews are seen in chapter four as similar scapegoats and victims of the paranoid fear of a Christendom whose ideas of fulfilled messianism do not square with reality, which is much less than utopian. Ruether allows that witches were condemned for 'heresy' rather than for bad deeds, but she disbelieves Margaret Murray's suggestions that witchcraft represented an alternative organised religion, the remnants of the pre-Christian belief and cult.[90] Perhaps Ruether is too eager to see witches as a purely psychological projection of male-dominated medieval Christianity. Certainly, women were scapegoats, more or less innocent victims, but Europe has not been as monolithically Christian as one would have thought and this fact might well have serious implications. Ruether might also be reacting on this point against Mary Daly's use of Margaret Murray's

[89] Ibid., chapter three, pp. 63-86.

[90] See, for example, Margaret Murray, God of the Witches. London: Oxford University Press, 1933.

is basically the same and women can become equal by being masculinised, male-identified persons, or there is a difference in consciousness between women and men which indicates a separation of rôles, with the women serving inevitably in an auxiliary function to men. Neither alternative is a good solution; there must be a way of being equal and specifically womanly at the same time. As yet, there is no feminist psychoanalysis, so that the meaning of whole personhood for women is still unknown, and existing territory needs to be mapped out.[95]

In chapter seven, Ruether handles the alliance between feminism and socialism. She feels that both Marx and Engels were correct in maintaining that until women and men were economically autonomous, relations between them could not really be free. While Ruether sees that Marxists are right to be suspicious of bourgeois feminism, she also sees that Lenin was superficial because he did not see the need for the psychological level of consciousness-raising. She also notes that the Marxist repression of sexuality is not a good thing. Sexism is the most basic and wide-spread form of subjugation: the overcoming of this oppression will necessitate a wholesale change in humanity's way of life.[96]

"Women, Ecology, and Social Revolution" is the title of the final, crucial essay. Women have always been identified with nature, and domination has been mankind's stance towards both the earth and the female.

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[95] Ibid., chapter six, pp. 131-161.

[96] Ibid., chapter seven, pp. 162-185. For Ruether's views on the type of socialism that she would endorse for American society, see Disputed Questions: On Being a Christian, Nashville: Abingdon, 1982, pp. 85-90. Such socialism would be "democratic, American, non-sectarian, and political". (p. 86).

theories on witchcraft.[91] Whether the witch-hunt is primarily misogynism or fanatical and defensive orthodoxy, it is interesting to note that it comes in an age of economic and political upheaval.[92] Such conditions of fear and insecurity also produced the holocaust of the Jews in the twentieth century.[93]

The interrelation of racism and sexism is studied in chapter five. This is done from the standpoint of the American historical experience. Neither blacks nor women are sufficiently aware of the true complexity of the system of oppression of which both are a part. Although racism and sexism are not parallel, they are closely connected. Ruether stresses the fact that the classic oppressor/oppressed paradigm is too simple for dealing fully with complicated reality, and she emphasises the need for self-criticism and perspective within liberation movements.[94]

Chapter six deals with the feminist pros and cons of psychoanalysis. Ruether clearly points out Freud's contributions (understanding of repression and projection) and defects (penis-envy theory and defining feminine 'normalcy' as infantile dependence). She also points out the danger of Jungian romanticism and spiritualisation. Significantly, she states the basic dilemma: either the consciousness of men and of women

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[91] See Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973.

[92] For treatment of witchcraft as heresy and social protest see: J. B. Russell, Witchcraft in the Middle Ages. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1972. Especially pp. 1-19; 166-186.

[93] Rosemary Ruether, New Woman, New Earth, chapter four, pp. 89-114.

[94] Ibid., chapter five, pp. 115-130.

The problem behind both women's liberation and ecology is the struggle to move beyond the whole domination orientation and to provide a new world view and new values. The women's movement is linked to ecology in a way that other liberation movements are not, probably because of the radical challenge which both pose to a domination-oriented world view. The new vision of harmony, according to Ruether, is a mixture of democratic socialism and ecological technology. There must be a new religion of wholeness and harmony; a new belief in community, not for withdrawal, but for transformation; a new vision of the matrix of being which is our beginning and end, rather than our self-infinitisation, which is destructive of the earth.[97]

Rather than developing one argument systematically, New Woman, New Earth develops its theme in circular fashion and studies it from various viewpoints. This is a book broad in perspective and in vision and, although it sometimes seems repetitious, it does take us full circle. Again and again, we see freedom defined here as "wholeness" in its full pre-exilic hebraic sense of salvation (shalom).

10. From Machismo To Mutuality: Woman-Man Liberation

From Machismo To Mutuality is the product of collaboration between two persons, Rosemary Ruether and Eugene Bianchi. It was published in

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[97] Ibid., pp. 186-214. Ruether develops the idea of the connection between social domination and abuse of the earth in "Ecology and Human Liberation: A Conflict between the Theology of History and the Theology of Nature?" To Change the World. London: S.C.M. Press, 1981. Chapter V.

1976, but written in 1974, at about the same time as New Woman, New Earth. It is a refreshingly mutual undertaking by two theologians of the Roman Catholic tradition, Ruether dealing with the more theoretical, historical side, and Bianchi translating the meaning of this into existential, often autobiographical terms. The main message of this book, stated by Bianchi in the introduction, is that the question of female-male liberation is here to stay. The book is aimed at provoking reflection and reaction, and provides questions at the end to encourage this. Bianchi suggests that what is really at stake in man-woman freedom is a rediscovery of the communal impulse, of co-humanity.[98]

The book begins with a broad historical survey of the history of symbolic structures of sexism. Much of this is similar to New Woman, New Earth, chapter one. In the midst of this, there is some explicit comment by Ruether which reveals her stance vis-a-vis scripture. Ruether feels that one must recognise that biblical literature is a part of patriarchal culture, validating the system; it cannot be whitewashed or "doctored" to appear otherwise. However, there are hints in biblical literature which point towards the redemptive overthrow of patriarchy and the restoring of primal equality. These redemptive elements have always been ignored by the Church; it is our responsibility to develop the redemptive elements, thereby pushing patriarchal tradition beyond its limit.[99] In chapter two, Bianchi retells chapter one from the

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[98]Eugene C. Bianchi and Rosemary Ruether, From Machismo to Mutuality. New York: Paulist Press, 1976. Introduction by Eugene Bianchi, pp.1-6.

[99]Rosemary Ruether, Ibid., chapter one, pp. 7-22.

point of view of his experience of patriarchal structures. He does not try to excuse the past, but leaves us with the challenge: "Are we willing to begin again?"[100]

Chapter three, by Ruether, studies the historical impact of the industrial revolution, which produced the cult of true womanhood. Industrial society emerged with a new nuclear family, having a compensatory function, and with it a new privatised and romanticised view of the home and the woman. The new woman became the high priestess of intimacy, pristinely innocent and tranquilly religious; she represented the last escape, the heart in a heartless world. This idealisation, this pedestal, divorced her from having real power or influence, and separated her in reality from men too. Ruether concludes with a word of caution about the contemporary quest for intimacy and instant encounter which could be no more than an alleviation of the continuing alienation of technological consumer society.[101] Bianchi follows with a personalised account of how sexism breeds violence, including the comprehensive competitiveness which leads to the social violence of concentrated goods and power. Bianchi sees the male mystique as a negation of co-humanity and of essentially biblical communitarianism as well as a refusal of one part of the self.[102]

Ruether moves to the very centre of the problem between the sexes in chapter five when she asks, "Why do we brutalise sex? Why are we

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[100]Eugene Bianchi, Ibid., chapter two, pp. 23-38.

[101]Rosemary Ruether, Ibid., chapter three, pp. 39-53.

[102]Eugene Bianchi, Ibid., chapter four, pp. 54-69.

afraid of sexuality?" Chapter five deals with the basic fear of love, the terror of real communication with its possibilities which extend even to ecstasy. Sexuality is debased and woman is held at a distance because we fear love's challenge and power. Ruether again analyses how love/sex is debased through two versions of the body/spirit split: asceticism and libertinism. Ruether's discussion of marriage was written at a time when the book Open Marriage was immensely popular.[103] She clearly sees the enormous pressures on modern marriage which is supposed to provide everything that is needed in terms of sex, friendship, support, and secure family life. Following the open marriage theme of trusting unpossessiveness, she says that persons need more than one deep relationship in their life. Ruether is less explicit about whether she feels extramarital intercourse is possibly, at least in some rare cases, permissible. Ruether's idea of the personalisation of sex is a wholistic challenge both to the view of sex-for-procreation-only and to the casual, libertine approach. She pleads for a new morality of careful friendships committed to total welfare and mutual growth. This can throw a new light on the issue of homosexuality, which can be wholistic without being procreative or even complementary in the hetero-sexual sense.[104] Ruether argues against the old complementarity theory in all types of relationships: what is wanted is relations between whole

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[103] See Nena and George O'Neil, Open Marriage: A New Life Style for Couples. New York: Avon Books, 1972.

[104] An interesting comparison may be drawn with the British Roman Catholic writer, Jack Dominian, who, although more cautious in approach, also takes a person-centred growth-oriented view of sexuality. See especially Jack Dominian, Proposals for a New Sexual Ethic. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977.

persons who can be both colleagues and lovers, freed of clinging dependency or dwarfed development.[105] Bianchi, in chapter six, supplements Ruether's ideas, with his concept of psychic celibacy, i.e., the keeping of women at a distance, mentally and emotionally, which is at the root of our patriarchal world-view. Bianchi feels that a balance of assertiveness and receptivity within each whole person would enrich and facilitate friendship and enjoyment between men and women. He makes the good point that a wholist (androgynous) civilisation first of all requires accepting ourselves, and that this is profoundly religious.[106]

Ruether's chapter seven, entitled "Sexism and the Liberation of Women", is mainly a reinterpretation of words/symbols of Christian theology. For Ruether, sisterhood does not equal the church, however therapeutic, redemptive, and revelatory it might be. The Church is for Ruether a community of women and men, quite beyond heterosexual complementarity, beyond stereotypes, moving towards wholeness. The Church is a redemptive community which recognises the ways in which both women and men are distorted by sexism. Ruether comes out squarely against female separation which would mean a lack of ability to be self-critical. She reaffirms her conviction that women must fight the oppressive sexist system rather than particular male persons. Communitarian socialism makes its appearance in this essay, again, as a part of the strategy and goal of liberation. Freedom clearly emerges in this essay as wholeness, which here equals co-humanity.[107] Bianchi follows this chapter with

[105]Rosemary Ruether, Machismo to Mutuality, chapter five, pp. 70-86.

[106]Eugene Bianchi, Ibid., chapter six, pp. 87-101.

[107]Rosemary Ruether, Ibid., chapter seven, pp. 102-118.

autobiographical notes on his own road toward mutuality. He comments that the beginning of liberation is leaving behind self-sufficiency and being able to be self-critical and willing to accept the help of others.[108]

In the epilogue, Ruether suggests that sexism is rightly the issue of the seventies. Sexism belongs to the seventies' mood of deeper reflection which takes us to the basic split in human consciousness. She believes that, because of its radical nature, the gospel has been betrayed by the Church nearly from the beginning. In closing, she adds that political hope and biblical hope are not completely separate, but are both alike interested in one humanity and long for a new world where all things will be 'very good'.[109] This emphasis on mutuality, on recognition of sexism as destructive to both women and men, typifies the new mood of feminist thinking.

11. Mary--The Feminine Face of the Church

Ruether's study of Mary in the Bible and through the ages was published as a part of a series of Bible studies for laity put out by the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Somewhat later it was published in book form. This work is an expansion of Ruether's essay on Mariology which appeared in New Woman, New Earth.[110] There is a considerable addition of material, especially biblical material, but the point of the study remains the same. This is an attempt

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[108]Eugene Bianchi, Ibid., chapter eight, pp. 119-131.

[109]Rosemary Ruether, Ibid., Epilogue, pp. 132-139.

[110]Rosemary Ruether, New Woman, New Earth, chapter two.

to understand how the image of Mary has operated in relationship to the freedom of women. Ruether feels that, despite the many uses of Mariology which are negative to women, there is a liberating possibility in this feminine symbol at the heart of the Church. Probably, the Church has been mistaken in praising Mary of Nazareth to the neglect of the several Marys who were Jesus' disciples. But Mary might well be the symbol for a ministry of service, a community of equals, the new humanity which is the Church. The study not only speaks about the history of a feminine symbol, but points a way to how women might find a meaningful place within the Church.[111]

12. Women of Spirit: Paradigms of Women's Leadership in Christianity.

"Mothers of the Church: Ascetic Women in the Late Patristic Age" is the main contribution of Ruether to this collection of essays which she edited together with Eleanor McLaughlin.

This chapter in Women of Spirit is on ascetic women in the period which Ruether knows so well from her doctoral research on Gregory of Nazianzus. Much of this paper is an exploration of the comings and goings of various women ascetics in the late patristic period.[112]

There is matter relevant to the theme of freedom in the introduction and conclusion of this chapter. Ruether recognises that few will see

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[111] Rosemary Ruether, "Mary--The Feminine Face of the Church", in Enquiry. Crawford, Indiana: Geneva Press, Vol. 9, No. 2, December 1976-February 1977. Later published in book form by Westminster Press, 1977.

[112] Rosemary Ruether, "Mothers of the Church: Ascetic Women in the Late Patristic Age." Women of Spirit. (eds.) Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979.

the ascetic movement as particularly liberating or attractive. She notes that asceticism carries with it a denial of sexuality and of the goodness of creation. But she points out that there was a more positive aspect to female asceticism too. In the late patristic period, marriage was often forced upon girls at the age of twelve or fourteen for political or economic reasons. Asceticism gave women another option and the support of the Church against family pressure. Ruether states that "What is liberating is relative", and she sees in asceticism a possibility for women of that age to take charge of their own lives and to reject being governed and defined by others. Positively, asceticism offered to women opportunity to live in female-directed communities, to attain the highest self-development as autonomous persons, and to have a secure existence. The ascetic woman was assumed to be equal with men. Although women paid for the ascetic alternative life-style with a sacrifice of earthly pleasures such as sex and child-bearing, ascetic men also had a similar price to pay. Patristic ascetics, both women and men, were a new kind of hero, the spiritually creative people of their age. The tragedy of women ascetics is that they have been denied a place in the Church's tradition; little has been preserved of their scholarship and letters because in the church women could not be recognised as doctors no matter how holy they might be. The ascetic women of the patristic age are the forgotten mothers of Christianity. This study demonstrates the relative, situation-bound nature of liberation.[113]

Ruether also contributes the second half of chapter thirteen dealing with the struggle of women for the priesthood. She speaks here with

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[113] Ibid.

particular reference to the Roman Catholic experience. Ruether traces the history of the movement of Catholics for the ordination of women, which became highly visible in the seventies in the United States, back to the original Catholic feminist organisation, the St. Joan's Alliance, which began in Britain in 1910. Ruether notes the key rôle of women religious in this struggle, their connection with feminism, and the far-reaching implications of their quest. Ruether concludes that, because no democratic structures exist in the Roman Catholic Church, change in the tradition of male priests only will be a long time in coming. But, in its coming, some central ideas will also be modified, such as ideas about hierarchy, authority, and theology. "This even more than women may be what the hierarchy fears".[114]

13. The Liberating Bond: Covenants--Biblical and Contemporary

Wolfgang Roth and Rosemary Ruether have cooperated in producing a book aimed at adult education and discussion. It is American not only in its approach to Christian education, with the laity being assumed to have a high level of theological curiosity and intellectual preparation; it is also contextually American in its questioning of the meaning of covenant within the political, social, and religious situation of the United States. This book is intended for study by groups and includes an extensive study guide written by Elizabeth McWhorter, which may be adapted to fit the needs of various groups.

[114]Rosemary Ruether in "Entering the Sanctuary: The Struggle for Priesthood in Contemporary Episcopalian and Roman Catholic Experience." Women of Spirit. (eds.) Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979. p. 382.

Wolfgang Roth leads one through the development of the covenant concept within the bible; Rosemary Ruether examines and questions the impact of the covenant idea on aspects of modern culture.[115]

The first of Ruether's six chapters talks about voluntary communities in history and today whose strength has been the active faith and commitment of each person, and whose problem has been their continuity. She discusses the basic tension between limited, selective membership and out-goingness; groups have tried to resolve this tension by adopting a common uniting discipline while living together as groups dedicated to the service of society at large.[116]

Marriage is the topic of the second chapter by Ruether. Ruether evaluates the New Testament's Christ-Church analogy for marriage, noting its positive contributions, but rejecting the hierarchical model for relationship between husband and wife. While this analogy makes submission and receptiveness normative for all Christians before God, this tends to carry over into social relations, justifying a posture of the lordship of some over others. Rather, a truly covenantal model is suggested: the partnership marriage of mutuality and equal opportunity. Partnership marriage might well make possible new ways of thinking about God. God might become for us in this way one who needs activity on the part of humankind even as we are dependent on the action of God.[117]

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[115]Wolfgang Roth and Rosemary Ruether, The Liberating Bond. New York: Friendship Press, 1978.

[116]Ibid., pp. 45-52.

[117]Ibid., pp. 53-59.

The American experiment in government as a political covenant and a mutual discipline freely accepted and agreed upon is discussed in the next chapter. Although the theory was not an American invention, the application on large scale of rule based not on might but on the participation of the people was bold indeed. In the Puritan tradition, the founders of the United States rejected all ideas of inherited, natural, or divine right to political power; rather, government was by the consent of the governed, in accordance with a contract theory. The puritan covenantal idea also expresses a relationship between God and people as well as between human beings. This has led at times to national pride and imperialism; it has also afforded a basis for criticism of the life of the nation.[118] Ruether then turns to suggest in chapter ten that the original contract theory forgot to gain the advice and consent of all the people governed: blacks, Indians, women were among those who had no say in their own government. Much work still needs to be done to make sure that a contract society truly represents all people and respects their cultural uniqueness.[119] The idea of America as a covenantal community also means that there is impetus for continual judgement, renewal, and change. This Ruether illustrates in chapter eleven with discussion of abolitionism, women's rights, the social gospel, and the civil rights movement.[120]

In her concluding chapter, Ruether appeals once again (as she did

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[118]Ibid., pp. 60-66.

[119]Ibid., pp. 67-74.

[120]Ibid., pp. 75-83.

previously in Faith and Fratricide) for the necessity of dialogue between Judaism and Christianity, especially in this area of covenantal theology. Today many peoples and nations see themselves as "elect" or "special", often due to the work of Christian mission and the spread of Christian understanding. Now we are forced to consider whether there might not be a universalism which picks up and rejoices in awakening pride in human particularity and diversity. A covenant concept, an ideology of mutuality and partnership, which comes to us from scripture, might well teach us to live together with a common devotion to God and a uniting purpose, the service of all.[121]

14. Periodicals

Rosemary Ruether has written an enormous number of articles for periodicals and for book symposia. Her articles are often her best work, because here she is addressing herself to a specific topic, and often to a particular audience, within certain limits of length. Often her articles are more to the point and frequently far more entertaining than her books. Many of her articles for periodicals are later included, many in a slightly altered form, in her books. But there are also a number of short articles which deal with a very particular and/or personal point on the contemporary scene; it is especially here that Ruether's humour, humanity, and insight come through.

Besides contributions to eighteen book symposia, Ruether lists one hundred and sixty-two articles in her bibliography between 1963 and 1978.

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[121] Ibid., pp. 84-91.

She writes frequently for such major publications as Christianity and Crisis, Christian Century, National Catholic Reporter, The Ecumenist, and Theology Today. But she also has articles appearing in little-known or institutional publications. While she often is addressing a national or international audience, she is still involved with particular local concerns and groups.[122]

Although most of the themes addressed in Ruether's articles reappear directly or indirectly in her books, there are some publications in periodicals that are of unique interest. Ruether's earliest articles include several on the theme of birth control. These arise not only out of the existential situation of the Ruether family, but out of the atmosphere of debate on birth control that followed the first session of the Second Vatican Council. Ruether does not really consider abortion as an option, but comes out strongly in favour of the pill, provided it be proved medically safe. In her discussions of this issue, she reveals, at this early stage, the same personalist and holistic approach to marriage and sexuality that she takes up much later during the seventies.[123]

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[122]Personal bibliography supplied by Rosemary Ruether. Compiled in 1979; Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A.

[123]Ruether, "Marriage, Love, and Children". Jubilee. vol. 11, no. 8. December 1963, p. 17f.
Ruether, "Woman, Birth Control, and the Church". Frontline. vol. 2, no. 3. Winter 1964.
Ruether, "A Question of Dignity, A Question of Freedom". What Modern Catholics Think About Birth Control. William Birmingham (ed.). New York: New American Library, 1964. p. 2 33f.
Ruether, "Birth Control and the Ideals of Marital Sexuality". Contraception and Holiness. (ed) Thomas D. Roberts. London: Collins, 1965. p. 65f.

Ecclesiology is a constant interest of Ruether's, in her periodical articles as in her books. However, in a number of articles, Ruether also gives us specific suggestions about pastoral expertise and strategy. She writes about Christian education, about visual arts, about liturgy, about theological education.[124] She even puts forth a programme for a liberal/radical take-over of the institutional church that would produce real renewal.[125]

The series of short articles appearing in the National Catholic Reporter between August 1968 and January 22, 1969 is particularly interesting. These are very brief pieces, usually of the human interest variety. She speaks often about experiences in inner-city Washington, commenting on involvement with a poor white family named the Larkes and the atmosphere of burned-out Fourteenth Street after riots in the black ghetto.[126] Race relations are talked about from the standpoint of her

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[124] See, for example:
Ruether, "Basic Eucharist for Small Groups". Continuum. Vol. 5, no. 3. Fall, 1967.
Ruether, "The Visual Arts for the Church of the Present". The Living Light. Vol. 4, no. 2. Summer 1967.
Ruether, "St. Stephen's Educational Program". Living Light. Vol. 5, no. 1. Spring 1968.

[125] Ruether, "Catholic Liberals Must Converge", National Catholic Reporter. October 8, 1971. p. 7.
Ruether, "Creating a New Kind of Religious Community". National Catholic Reporter. October 30, 1968.

[126] Ruether, "The Larkes and the Changing Seasons". National Catholic Reporter. September 25, 1968.
Ruether, "Easter on 14th Street". National Catholic Reporter. November 2, 1968.

experience in the Mississippi delta.[127] Together with her amusing article on the peace protest of Episcopal and Catholic groups who attempted to celebrate a mass for peace in the middle of the Pentagon,[128] these pieces show Ruether at her human and communicative best.

Humour and a light touch serve Ruether well in many of her articles, especially when treating topics that are too controversial to handle otherwise. Such is her comment on the confrontation style of the Berrigans: she has us laughing our way into mock sorrow for Mr. Francis Xavier Worthington, victim of her own militant show-down with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and symbol of all that must be transformed as well as confronted.[129]

Yet, Ruether's articles are not all in a light vein. Some of her most profound work appears in periodicals rather than in her books. This is particularly true in the case of her work on Christology, where several articles give us hints at what might be contained in a yet unpublished manuscript.[130] Often her articles have a pungent

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[127]Ruether, "Why Not Pin Police Badges on Ghetto Militants?" National Catholic Reporter. November 13, 1968.
Ruether, "Black realists, white idealists". National Catholic Reporter. August 1, 1968.

[128]Ruether, "Celebrating Life in the Cathedral of Death". National Catholic Reporter. December 9, 1968.

[129]Ruether, "Beyond Confrontation". The Berrigans. (ed.) William Van Ertan Casey and Philip Noble. New York: Avon, 1971. p. 113f.

[130]Ruether, "An Invitation to Jewish-Christian Dialogue". The Ecumenist. Vol. 10, No. 2. January/February, 1972. p. 17f.
Ruether, "Paradoxes of Human Hope: The Messianic Horizon of Church and Society". Theological Studies. Vol. 33, no. 2. June 1972.
Ruether, "Who was Jesus? What is the Church?" A Dialogue with Gregory Baum. National Catholic Reporter.

prophetic quality to them; she uses the press to express her criticism of society, church, and the radical movement on the Catholic and American scenes.[131]

Although there are occasional autobiographical references in a number of Ruether's articles, there is one piece which is entirely her own story. This is in a book edited by Gregory Baum which attempts to trace the influence of experience on religious thinking. Ruether's contribution gives us considerable insight into her intellectual development and personal growth. She talks here about her family background, her fascination with the world of antiquity and her growing involvement in the issues and actions of contemporary times. She emerges as one who would be a historian, critical and responsible from within the very human institutions of the church and the nation.[132]

Ruether's articles in periodicals and book symposia are very mixed in kind, quality and importance. But they are essential reading for an understanding of this theologian.

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[131] For example, see:
Ruether, "J. Edgar Hoover Has Brought Us Together". World View. March 1971. Vol. 14, no. 3. p.8.
Ruether, "Letter to Catholic Radicals--After the Actions--What?" National Catholic Reporter. October 2, 1970. p. 14.

[132] Ruether, "Beginnings: An Intellectual Autobiography". Journeys: Theological Autobiographies. (ed) Gregory Baum. New York: Paulist Press, 1975.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM IN THE WORK OF ROSEMARY RUETHER

A. Key themes in the thought of Rosemary Ruether

Rosemary Ruether is not a systematic theologian. Yet there are several themes and key ideas that form the nucleus of her theological approach. These ideas and points of emphasis determine her views on various questions. Ruether's concept of freedom flows out of these major areas of thought, all of which are inter-related.

1. Creation--Redemption--New Creation

Creation is very good. This affirmation of nature and of humankind is first and foremost in Ruether's thinking. Ruether emphasises the insight of pre-exilic Hebrew religion, which like the Canaanite faiths around it, was a communal and nature-based religion of renewal. Humankind and the earth were seen as one good community created and held in being by God. The natural world is the place where God is active and to be known. It is in no way inferior or bad. Harmony with creation means harmony within God's sovereignty: disobedience to God results in rupture in social relations and in environmental disaster.[1] Because creation is God's activity, there is an earthiness to spirituality. There is a physical character and a bodiliness about authentic existence in God because there is no division of body and spirit. Ruether stresses that the spirit can not be dematerialised and that matter must not be utterly objectified. God is active in the midst of creation, continuously

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[1] New Woman, New Earth, pp. 187-88.

bringing into being; God is 'incarnate' in creation.[2]

Creation is "being from God". Creation is only authentic when it is grounded in God's act of grace. Only when we are rooted in God's activity are we free creatures: we cannot affirm ourselves, we cannot truly be ourselves until we acknowledge God's gift of life. Freedom is knowing our creatureliness, not becoming self-sufficient, self-made persons. Freedom is awareness that we are dependent on God's gracious and constant making.[3] Being a creature is not degrading, but miraculous. We can never go higher than creatureliness. We cannot be better by being more unnatural and religious.[4]

Persons come to know themselves as creatures within community. The awareness of being-from-God is only possible, according to Ruether, in communion with others.[5] God has made the earth as the setting of human life together. Only here, with the company of God's people, can we know who we truly are and where we are going. Ruether makes the celebration of good creation a focal point as she speaks of the Lord's Supper in her book for children. The community is where we share the gifts of creation, and in so doing discover not only ourselves and each other, but the earth as well.[6]

Ruether does not see creation as a long ago event. Rather it is a

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[2]The Church Against Itself, p. 163.

[3]Ibid., p. 160.

[4]Ibid., p. 163.

[5]Ibid., p. 160.

[6]Communion, p. 7.

dynamic happening, both the ground of our being and the essence of our becoming. It is not historical, but eschatological; it is not an event once over and done with, but a plan, an intention founding our being and leading into the final future.[7]

Scholastic anthropology which made the state of nature inferior to that of grace is rejected by Ruether. She claims that this false anthropology in Catholic theology has led to the hierarchical split between clergy and laity. Rather she states, with patristic and protestant theology, that creation and redemption, nature and grace, are related dynamically. There is an inner continuity between them.[8] "God is redeemer as creator"; redemption cannot be separated from this earth and these times.[9] Redemption is the realisation of the gift and the promise of creation: it is a restoration to the original intention, not a becoming 'supernatural'. Redemption picks up the threads of God's plan broken by disobedient humanity and knits them together into a continuum.[10] Creation, our beginning and our becoming in grace, makes possible also the self-judgement and repentance necessary to begin again. Redemption (or liberation in Ruether's words) is a free gift, undeserved, and yet a recognition of created human goodness makes possible a rejection of all that is false and oppressive in fallen reality.[11]

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[7] Church Against Itself, p. 188.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Rosemary Ruether, "What is the task of theology?" Christianity and Crisis. Vol. 1. 36, No. 9, May 24, 1976. p. 122.

[10] Church Against Itself, p. 189.

[11] Liberation Theology, p. 9.

Humanity's refusal of creatureliness, its drive towards domination and self-sufficiency apart from God, is the shattering of the creational vision. Self-creation marks the "fall" from created God-initiated goodness.[12] This self-creation and domination is what the New Testament means by "the world"; it is all the systems and structures and schemes that ignore the gift and grace of God. "The world" is the opposite of creation, although these concepts have often been confused. "This world" is the fallen and broken set of idols; creation is the essential and eschatological reality. "This world" is the powers and principalities, the alienation and oppression, that come of humans' desires to make themselves into gods.[13]

Redemption, then, is a restoring to creation, certainly not an escape from it. Redemption is destruction of the false world of human pretension in order that humankind might return to its natural, finite, open, here and now existence.[14] Redemption is not something which we earn, but rather something which empowers us to see who we really are and to dare to be who we are in the context of the community. Redemption is what makes it possible for us to confess (and to forgive).[15] Repentence, then, along with a capacity for self-criticism and an openness to transformation, is the result of redemption. Ruether follows Bonhoeffer in seeing the ability to confess our sins to each other as the power of

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[12] Church Against Itself, p. 160.

[13] Radical Kingdom, p. 164.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Liberation Theology, p. 9.

new creation. This confessing before others, far more difficult than self-forgiveness, acts to heal and to unite the community as one of forgiven sinners.[16]

Redemption happens wherever human beings are being recreated, healed, and put in right relationship to themselves and to others. It is not limited to the church, but cuts across ecclesiastical and secular lines to challenge people wherever they are acting and thinking in a self-absolutising way.[17] Redemption is present wherever the prophetic word is spoken: "Wherever men stand up against evil, God's kingdom is already here", Ruether says to the black children of the Washington inner-city.[18] Prophecy is a redemptive instrument which calls out in self-judgement-unto-repentance from within the community of faith; it also proclaims the possibility of transformation, leaving no one with an excuse of hopelessness to plead when active change is necessary. This task of prophecy is particularly the role of liberation theology.[19] Liberation theology might alternatively be called redemption theology because it combines both judgement and promise towards the present reality and practice. Liberation theology is not merely the validation of human wishes, the rationalisation of supposed human rights. Rather, liberation theology is a redemptive tool hewn from an acknowledgement of the grace and gift of the good creation of humankind; liberation

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[16] Church Against Itself, pp. 186 & 189.

[17] Radical Kingdom, p. 165.

[18] Communion Is Life Together, p. 47.

[19] "What is the Task of Theology?", p. 124.

will happen is beyond comprehension, because it will be a radically different change from any that we have known. Teilhard de Chardin envisaged this transformation in the "omega point". Ruether suggests that the utterly new kind of humanity of the New Creation is precisely what faith in resurrection of the dead and creation from nothing mean.[23] The resurrection of Jesus is not the final redemptive act; rather it is a proleptic proclamation and experiencing of what the new creation will be.[24]

2. Dualism

Rosemary Ruether stresses not only the goodness and wholeness of creation as understood by the Hebrews, but she also emphasises that something has happened which has shattered humankind's vision and faith in God's world. Ruether's exposition of dualism as the root of many contemporary problems is her hallmark; she has found this key to modern understanding amidst her studies of classics and Christian origins. An understanding of the historical development of dualism provides suggestions about what liberation means and in which direction one must move towards freedom.

Not all dualism can be labelled Hellenist and unbiblical. Dualism is a much wider and deeper phenomenon than one supposes. While every religion in antiquity began as nature-based and life-affirming, each one

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[23] Radical Kingdom, p. 218.
See also: Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre. The Phenomenon of Man. London: Collins, 1955.

[24] Faith and Fratricide, p. 250.

theology therefore does not so much champion human rights as it defends God's right to bestow created worth and value upon all of the children of the world. Redemption means change and transformation within the arena of history; it is the putting right of creation, not the abandonment of it. Ruether does not separate political hope and biblical hope when she says at the conclusion of From Machismo to Mutuality that God's "mandate for creation is redemption..."[20]

New Creation is the final fulfilment of the original plan and promise of creation. It is what God's people will know when the work of redemption (or if you like, liberation) is finished. New creation is not a purely 'spiritual' state, but rather the satisfaction of all human hopes, all intentions for the earth. New creation means the reign or kingdom of God.[21] In Communion Is Life Together, the idea of the Kingdom is interchangeable with that of the new creation. This book begins with the community at the eucharist, and, appropriately, it also ends with communion. It is together as the people of God that we have a foretaste of the new age, and we begin to enter into "that good land which God promised to us from the beginning. This is the new creation which comes into the world wherever people love each other."[22] The kind of complete fulfilment, total transformation of human nature and historical reality which the Kingdom requires is utterly impossible in this world and within this humankind as we know it. How the New Creation

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[20] From Machismo to Mutuality, p. 138.

[21] Communion is Life Together, p. 8.

[22] Ibid., pp. 47-48.

turned from this-worldly hopes to otherworldly preoccupations and plans for salvation during the period between five hundred B. C. and two hundred B. C. This time period saw a movement towards a religious consciousness which was alienated and hostile to the world.[25] Upheaval, uprootedness, and the formation of vast empires, created a malaise for humankind, who seemed to be cut adrift from their moorings.[26] The symbols and gods of ancient faiths were no longer sufficient to give meaning and a sense of belonging in an unfamiliar world grown too vast and too far from the control of ordinary people. Both Jewish apocalypticism and Hellenistic gnosticism (although different in many respects) arose out of the experience of this age of acute alienation and suppressed identity. Both reject the present world as evil and both look for salvation beyond the real world of here and now.[27] Ruether, like Hans Jonas, sees the development of dualist thinking as a result of the historical experience of human estrangement and insignificance when traditional sources of security and order were swept away by empire builders. Hostility replaced harmony as the perspective from which one viewed the cosmos.[28]

Christianity has its roots in the world-negating beliefs of apocal-

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[25] Religion and Sexism, pp. 150-151.

[26] On this malaise, see the classic analyses of:
G. G. A. Murray, Five Stages of Greek Religion. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925, Chapter 4.
E. R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951, Chapter 8.

[27] Faith and Fratricide, pp. 48-50

[28] Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion. Boston: Beacon Press, 1958. pp. 247-251.

yptic Judaism and Hellenistic dualism, as well as in the world-affirming vision of the Hebrew people.[29] Apocalypticism was the radicalisation of the prophetic vision when ever larger and more oppressive powers made God's promise seem always more distant. Deliverance, according to apocalypticism, could only come from miraculous intervention from beyond, making the beginning of a new age. Gnosticism saw redemption in withdrawal from the world rather than in the apocalyptic assault on the world. The physical world is evil, the universe a trap of humanity's immortal spirit.[30] Apocalyptic writings pictured a world no longer within the sovereignty of God; gnostics stated that God the Creator was not good but a false demon.[31] Within Christianity, there has always been tension between creation-affirming and world-negating strands; Ruether calls special attention to the dilemma of the Cappadocian fathers in reconciling these seemingly contradictory sources of the Christian faith.[32] Although Christianity rejected Gnosticism in the second century, there was a continuing problem about the unity of creation and redemption. At last, a compromise was reached by the fathers of the church "by affirming an original bodily creation that wasn't quite sensual and the resurrection of a body that wasn't quite bodily..."[33]

In Ruether's references to Gnosticism, one might feel a certain

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[29]For roots of Christianity in apocalypticism, see E. Kaesemann, "The Beginnings of Christian Theology", New Testament Questions of Today, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969.

[30]Liberation Theology, pp. 25-27.

[31]New Woman, New Earth, pp. 189-190.

[32]Gregory of Nazianzus, p. 140.

[33]Religion and Sexism, pp. 151-152.

uneasy vagueness. What exactly does she consider Gnosticism to be? Since this is a highly debatable topic, it would have been helpful if she had defined for us more clearly what she means by Gnosticism and gnostic characteristics.[34] According to Edwin Yamauchi, the problem of defining Gnosticism is normally given two different types of solution: there is a "narrow definition" which refers to a specific system of belief; there is also a "broad definition" which finds evidence for Gnosticism in the New Testament and in many pre-Christian documents. The "narrow definition" school says that there is a difference between systematic post-Christian Gnosticism and merely gnostic-like thoughts and tendencies that were later to be incorporated into the system of Gnosticism. The broad definition, advanced mainly by German scholars (Bousset, Reitzenstein and others of the Religionsgeschichtliche Schüle), sees Gnosticism in many forms of pre-Christian religious syncretistic dualism.[35] Ruether is certainly aware of the differences of opinion on the definition of Gnosticism and should have indicated in which camp she stands and thereby recognised the existence of the other schools of thought. One is left with the feeling that she draws her ideas mainly from the "broad definition" school, but there is some imprecision about this. It might have helped to note that Henry Chadwick defined Gnosticism neatly and indicates the difference of opinion clearly:

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[34]What Gnosticism was is now the subject of intensive study. The Nag Hammadi texts, only recently published in their entirety, promise new light on the issue on which there is not yet general consensus. See The Nag Hammadi Library (ed.) James M. Robinson, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977.

[35]Edwin M. Yamauchi, Pre-Christian Gnosticism. London: Tyndale Press, 1973. p. 16.

> "Gnosticism is an inclusive word used to mean various (a dozen or more) rival sects of Christianity which were theosophical variations."

He adds that this term can be used in a wider way of

> "an imprecise, syncretistic religiosity diffused widely in the Levantine world, and existing independently of and prior to Christianity." 36

However, Ruether would probably feel most at home with the more sweeping definition of A. H. Armstrong:

> "Gnosticism is a dark form of the religious syncretism of the Hellenistic age, combining many diverse religious elements within a generally dualistic system to provide a rationale for a morality usually ascetic, though sometimes going to the opposite extreme. Gnosticism is obsessed with evil and consists essentially in a radical rejection of the world." 37

Although dualism was officially declared heresy, it continued to influence Christian spirituality and ethics. Physical reality was seen as evil, and human redemption was considered to be flight from all earthly and bodily things in search of the incorruptible and the transcendent.[38] Dualism meant separation and hostility between body and spirit, between subject and object. This alienation works on three levels: as alienation from the physical body; as alienation from other people; as alienation from the earth. A dualist rejection of the goodness of creation is both a rejection of people (including one's bodily self) and of physical environment. It means that one is given a mandate to put to death, to subdue, and dominate physical existence, rather than

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[36] Henry Chadwick, The Early Church. Penguin Books, 1967. p. 34.

[37] A. H. Armstrong, The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy. Cambridge: University Press, 1967. p. 166.

[38] New Woman, New Earth, p. 17.

a calling to protect, to steward, and to cultivate. Dualism is not only anti-sensual, but provides models for projection of the body-soul split onto people. "Lower" groups of people (women, blacks, Jews, enemies) are identified with the evil and hostile "lower" half of the dualism while dominant class groups see themselves as epitomising the higher part of the dualism.[39] Thus, Aristotle divides humankind into "head people" and "body people", making domination and subordination into ontological categories of human beings. Unfortunately, the fathers of the church largely took over this hierarchical view of the nature of humanity.[40] Christianity has been the carrier of the world-alienated dualism which officially it has condemned; thus Christianity bears guilt for much social oppression as well as the blame for a mentality of domination, exploitation and destruction.[41]

Sexism is based on the dualism which is carried illicitly by Christianity. Women are assigned the lower part of the dualism, and seen as bodily, weak, and subjugated; men are identified with intellect, authority, and power. God is symbolised as male, although Jesus attempted to redefine God's fatherhood in an egalitarian rather than a hierarchical manner.[42] Dualism provides the model for the split between men and women as well as for the split between spiritual femininity and carnal femaleness; this split reached its most intense point in the Middle Ages with

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[39] Liberation Theology, pp. 16-21.

[40] Machismo to Mutuality, pp. 15-16.

[41] Liberation Theology, pp. 21-22.

[42] New Woman, New Earth, pp. 74-75.

the height of mariology and the depths of the witch hunts.[43] The dualistic view that the body, sex, and women are evil has prevented development of wholesome inter-personal relationships between men and women.[44] Thus, dualism has not only been destructive of women and others identified with the "lower" half of humanity, but it has deformed and frustrated the healthy growth of the entire human race.

3. Church and eschatological community

What is the church for Rosemary Ruether? In 1970, after a number of years of intense thought and writing on ecclesiology, she replied that the church is "a beachhead of the new humanity", the "community of the new creation", "the anthropological myth for what community ought to be"; it is to be found wherever the new human being exists and anticipates a new age. Ruether does not separate the kingdom and the church, but sees them as the same eschatological reality and promise; however, Ruether certainly denies identification of the historical institution with the theological certainty.[45] Ruether accepts much of the ecclesiology of the radical reformation as her own: she believes that the church is a gathered community of declared believers, and that hierarchical divisions and distinctions between clergy and laity are unnecessary to the church. Still, she sees this charismatic community as

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[43] Machismo to Mutuality, p. 16.

[44] Liberation Theology, p. 19.

[45] Rosemary Ruether with Gregory Baum, "Who Was Jesus? What is the Church?" National Catholic Reporter, March 18, 1970.

remaining within, rather than separating itself from, the historical institution.[46]

The Church Against Itself is almost entirely about the church. Ruether is particularly preoccupied with ecclesiology during the sixties, speaking less about the institutional church as time moves on. She becomes more concerned with redemptive community over the years, less caught up in what the Roman Catholic Church is or is not doing. Her interest is always both concrete and theological.

Ruether states that the basic conflict within ecclesiology is the church as an historical institution versus the church as an eschatological community.[47] The problem of the delayed parousia has never been entirely solved with reference to the life of the Christian community. The ecstatic expectation of primitive Christianity had no use for permanent structure because it was prepared to change in order to maintain its validity over a lengthening period of time. The focus of concern shifted onto the question of how best to hand on the gospel to succeeding generations. By the second century, most of the excitement of living in the brief interim between resurrection and parousia was finished. The institutionalisation of the church began, absolutising structures and setting up authorities which claimed to guard the presence of the Holy Spirit, but in fact cast the spirit out of the main stream of the institution's life.[48] Yet, where the spirit is not present, there is no church;

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[46]Rosemary Ruether, "The Free Church Movement in Contemporary Catholicism." New Theology, No. 6 (eds) Martin Marty and Dean Peerman. MacMillan, 1969, pp. 285-286.

[47]Church Against Itself, p. 141.

[48]Ibid., pp. 58-59.

the messianic community exists only where it is founded upon the authentic being of persons, and where the spirit is openly received and freely accepted. The true church, thus, is constantly reborn of the spirit, provisional, proleptic, and unmanageable.[49] The community ever reborn of the spirit does not, however, destroy the necessity of the historical institution. Charisma is the essential mark of the church, but it is essentially response to the word proclaimed persistently by the historical institution, even when no life seems possible. The church is wherever there is response in the spirit to the word faithfully proclaimed. The institution is necessary to tide the faith over the dry periods, the nights of the corporate soul; but the institution does not control the life-giving spirit.[50]

The institutional church, to be faithful to the handing on of the gospel, must be able to change, to be used, to let itself go. Continuity with the gospel often means discontinuity with the past's way of doing things: the Christian community is only historical when it is the vanguard moving towards the new day. The eschatological and pneumatic nature of the church means that one cannot be limited to or by structures and organisations, yet one cannot be disassociated from them either: one is to be dedicated but disinterested, ready for God's active bringing into being a people wherever and however he/she wishes.[51] The

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[49]Rosemary Ruether, "The Believers' Church and Catholicity in the World Today". The Chicago Seminary Register, Vol. LX, No. 6, September 1970.

[50]Church Against Itself, pp. 154-155.

[51]Ibid., pp. 61-65.

charismatic community is to be in dialectical relationship with the institutional church, seeking to liberate it from within and give to it new possibilities of life; it is a revolutionary and prophetic body which challenges dead structures of dehumanisation and falsehood.[52] The church, institutional or charismatic, to be really the church, must remain self-critical. Yet to be truly prophetic, criticism and hatred of the Church's failures must arise out of love of the Church's promise and mission; one must acknowledge one's debt to even the most imperfect instruments of the historical handing on of the faith.[53]

Another basic tension in the life of the church is that between universality and particularity. The holy spirit comes to humankind in specific cultural and temporal situations; it becomes incarnate in the here and now of the situation. But one must not confuse the way of being the people of God in one particular situation with the catholic and everlasting church. Such confusion is idolatrous because it absolutises one cultural expression of faith; such confusion also causes division in the household of faith as different members seek to articulate the power of new being in their own terms. Between universality and particularity there must be creative tension, but there should never be alienating and destructive conflict.[54] Unity in the church is not to be found in structures or in specific cultural expressions of the faith,

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[52]Rosemary Ruether, "Foreword and Counterpoint",in Can These Bones Live? Robert S. Lecky and H. Elliott Wright. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969.

[53]Church Against Itself, pp. 203-207.

[54]Ibid., pp. 144-146.

but in the word of God. One need not try to find the 'best' or 'most perfect' type of Christian denomination or organisation; rather one recognises the relativity of all structure, and one begins where one is with new eyes and new hopes for the future. The unity of the church lies in its task, in the direction in which the people of God are moving together.[55] Similarly, although in many ways sisterhood (the groups of sharing and support that have grown up between women) might be redemptive community, it cannot be a model of what church means. The church must represent a community of all kinds of humans and must recognise that the salvation and freedom of all people is interrelated. The Church in its essence is beyond differences and divisions, seeking the co-humanity of all people.[56]

Ministry is inseparable from community in the church. Service is where we see and receive God's grace in human terms; the gospel is always given to us through other people.[57] Ministry is not for Ruether a matter of position or status; she sees the clergy/laity split as an obstacle to meaningful community and ministry. Ruether believes that all Christians are ministers, all belong to a general priesthood, and all are to join God's redemptive work in the world. She stresses that all believers need to be trained to serve, theologically as well as practically. Institutional ministry might be necessary, but it is not to be set apart;

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[55] Ibid., pp. 156-157.

[56] Machismo to Mutuality, pp. 114-116.

[57] Church Against Itself, pp. 173-175.

it needs to be de-mythologised and de-sacralised.[58] The essentials of ministry, which are to be undertaken by all believers, are forgiveness and communion. Those who forgive must also be those who confess; the community of the new creation is such that all receive the power to be open before each other, to be the broken sinners that they truly are.[59] Ruether sees that the question of the ordained ministry of women cannot be separated from the problem of the clergy/laity split in the institutional church. It will be impossible to incorporate women into the present male-defined clerical system without eventually breaking apart the elitist hierarchy and completely transforming the institutional church. Thus this issue is of far-reaching importance.[60]

Ruether would endorse secular theology's efforts to de-rigidify the church's encounter with the world. She would also say that the church has no monopoly of redemption, that the walls of the institution must be dissolved and power structures decreased. Ruether would urge Christians to join God's action wherever that might be happening in the world, to be the community of the new creation amidst society.[61]

The "local church" is a living concern in Ruether's thought. Here her ecclesiological theory becomes concrete as she is involved with specific movements and groups. What she means by the "local church" may not

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[58]Rosemary Ruether, "Ministry in the Church of the Future", in Secular Priest in the New Church (ed.) Gerard S. Sloyan. New York: Herder and Herder, 1967. pp. 240-245.

[59]Church Against Itself, pp. 185-186.

[60]Rosemary Ruether, "The Becoming of Women in Church and Society", Crosscurrents, Fall, 1967.

[61]Radical Kingdom, pp. 158-166.

have direct connection with a particular branch of an institution; it is more a specific group of Christian persons gathered around a concern and a commitment. The local church for Ruether is a "free floating redemptive process that exists in a multiplicity of interpersonal 'happenings'"; under ideal circumstances, a local parish might be related to this process.[62] Hopefully, the institution can be the meeting ground for such charismatic groups, providing places and people, plus joint opportunities for celebration. But the people, not the institutions, must provide the impetus for bringing into being communities of service and proclamation.[63] Ruether is interested in the "free church" or underground movements which spring from authentic longing for community and from frustration at the rigidity of the Catholic hierarchy; here she finds the renewal and the democratisation that are so slow in coming in the institutional church. It is in this environment that Ruether finds meaning and hope.[64]

Ruether's perspective on Christian community is throughout concretely eschatological: our present experience of life together is a foretaste of the coming new being. Maran atha remains the community's final prayer.[65]

4. Jesus of Nazareth: Christ and Messiah

Christology is a key issue for Ruether although it is not a predomi-

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[62]"Ministry in the Church of the Future", p. 236.

[63]Ibid., pp. 237-240.

[64]"The Free Church Movement in Contemporary Catholicism", pp. 272-287.

[65]Church Against Itself, pp. 168-169.

nant theme. Christology is important because Ruether sees it as both central to the Christian faith and an element in much of the contemporary dilemma. She is aware that the affirmation, "Jesus is the Christ",has been the root of many problems; she understands the crucial need for articulating a new Christology that is liberating in the modern age.[66] In the light of this, Ruether's comparative silence on christology might seem puzzling. At times, she seems almost to avoid the issue; still unpublished is a major manuscript of four hundred and sixty pages, Messiah of Israel and the Cosmic Christ.[67] Probably this is an area in which Ruether is still developing, wanting to consider carefully her thoughts before committing herself. It is certainly a dangerous area in which to commit oneself irrevocably, and caution is therefore understandable. However, it is in this area that Ruether might well have her most crucial and original contribution to make. Therefore, we shall try to piece together, from

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[66]Rosemary Ruether, "What Is the Task of Theology?",Christianity and Crisis, May 24, 1976. p. 124.

[67]Letter from Rosemary Ruether, June 7, 1978. This states that this work will not be published in the near future. The thesis of this work is largely contained in two articles: "In What Sense Can We Say That Jesus Was the Christ?" Ecumenist, January/February 1972; "Paradoxes of Human Hope", Theological Studies, June 1972.
In Disputed Questions: On Being A Christian (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982, pp. 48-50), Ruether explains how this manuscript came into being, how it was rejected for publication by Oxford University Press in 1970, and how she has made use of it for various projects and lectures. She still holds its basic ideas to be accurate, but she does not explain why a revised version has not been submitted for publication.

the material available, what her christology might look like.[68]

Ruether, along with many modern scholars, cannot see continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.[69] She believes that patristic christology was limited and a semi-failure, but that it was historically necessary and the best that could be done with the tools available at that time. In particular, she is doubtful about a soteriology based on incarnation which replaced an eschatological understanding of salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ.[70] In her children's book, Ruether refuses to state that "Jesus is God", saying rather that God was with Jesus, that Jesus' words were the same as God's words, that Jesus is the leader of God's kingdom.[71] This is explained in the parent/teacher guide by the statement that Jesus is being presented in simple terms, and first of all as a human being, without reliance of metaphysical christology, in order not to confuse or mislead the children.[72] Yet Ruether consistently

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[68]Ruether's christological thinking is quoted extensively but without comment in Case Studies in Christ and Salvation,(eds.) Jack Rogers, Ross MacKenzie, Louis Weeks. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977. pp. 141-150.
In To Change The World, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1981), Ruether brings together a number of ideas on christology which she has previously developed. In addition, in contrast to Cullmann, Ruether states that Jesus' view of the Kingdom was "essentially this worldly, social and political, and not eschatological" (p. 14). The socio-political dimension of Ruether's christology again emerges clearly here.

[69]Rosemary Ruether with Gregory Baum. "Who is Jesus? What is the Church?" National Catholic Reporter, March 18, 1970. pp. 2 and 6.

[70]Church Against Itself, pp. 75-76.
See also Liberation Theology, p. 10.

[71]Communion Is Life Together, pp. 35-39.

[72]Communion, pp. 16-17.

avoids the use of the patristic metaphysical terminology in speaking about Jesus; she simply will not conform to pre-formulated fourth century christology without a careful working through of the problem on her own. She accepts the orthodox interpretation of Jesus as the Christ as "an anthropological symbol...it has this ongoing life... each generation takes it up anew as a symbol of everything that they feel is valuable."[73] Furthermore, Ruether repeatedly rejects fulfilled messianism as the 'left hand' of Christianity which has caused anti-semitism as well as many absolutist forms of imperialism and intolerance.[74]

Ruether's approach to christology appears to be largely problem-centred: she is faced with the extreme consequences of anti-semitism and the cultural imperialism of christendom. Something must be wrong with a christology that could lead to the Jewish holocaust as well as to other forms of de-humanisation. She pin-points the source of the problem as the misunderstanding of the fundamental Christian affirmation that "Jesus is the Christ". Ruether would rather affirm the earliest Christian belief which stated that Jesus will be the Christ at the end of time. The Christ cannot have completely and finally come because evil, injustice and suffering are still very much with us; the promised messianic age is not yet here. Thus, Ruether's christology would be a forward-looking one of anticipation which acknowledges

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[73]"Who Is Jesus? What Is The Church?", p. 2.

[74]See Baum, Faith and Fratricide, pp. 12-14.
Also: Ruether, Liberation Theology, p. 191.

fully the reality of present misery and present problems.[75] Unlike the exponents of fulfilled messianism, Ruether takes the conditions of this world into her christological picture. Jesus is the proclaimer of the kingdom, the promise of the new day to come; he is paradigmatic and proleptic through the messianic work of his death and resurrection.[76]

Thus Ruether calls for a responsible relativising of christology. She stresses that Christians must recognise that Jesus is not the only way to know God, although he might be the only way for them. There must be room for other experiences of revelation, a respect for the differences of the cultural and historical identities of peoples. Since the Christ is the coming one, there should be an openness that an absolutised, finalised dogma of Jesus Christ would not allow. Various experiences of revelation can indeed be parallel or mutually helpful rather than contradictory.[77] However, relativising of christology must be faithful in maintaining transcendence. Transcendence is the opposite of all human idols. Transcendence is what allows the prophetic calling into question of all forms of society, all systems of thought and belief: it makes possible not only judgement but transformation. One can dismiss various christologies as irrelevant or meaningless, but one must affirm

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[75] Critics of Ruether's eschatological christology vary in their appreciation of this future-oriented thinking. Gregory Baum (in "Catholic Dogma After Auschwitz", p. 145) affirms Ruether's theory while John T. Pawlikowski (in "The Historicizing of the Eschatological and the Spiritualizing of the Eschatological: Some Reflections", p. 155) is sceptical. For both these writers, see Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity, (ed) Alan Davies, New York: Paulist Press, 1979.

[76] Faith and Fratricide, pp. 246-250.

[77] Ibid., pp. 250-251.
Also, Liberation Theology, p. 191.

that God stands beyond human words and ways, free to do as he/she wills. Transcendence judges all reflections as well as all actions.[78] Ruether's alternative christology does not offer a new 'lord' who might become the model for new patterns of domination; rather, "this is a christology of the process of conversion, the process of creating a new humanity of wholeness in mutuality. Jesus is not Lord of Christendom but the crucified beginning of this alternative that still goes out ahead of us, witnessing against its betrayal."[79]

Gregory Baum suggests that there are two ways of attempting to relativise Christian claims: the theology of universal grace (a modernised version of logos christology adopted by many protestant thinkers since the nineteenth century and, e.g., by Blondel and Rahner) and a theology which stresses an eschatological perspective and the incompleteness of present redemption. Rosemary Ruether comes into this second category. Her thinking emphasises that God's revelation in Jesus is incomplete and anticipates the final glory; Jesus is promise.[80]

Ruether is not content with logos christology or with the traditional metaphysical structure of Christian theology, although she does not totally reject certain points made. But she feels that the world-view to which traditional essentialist thought belonged is not

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[78]"What is the task of Theology?" pp. 122-123.

[79]Rosemary Ruether, "Christology and Feminism: Can a Male Saviour Help Women?" Occasional Papers, United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry, U. S. A. Vol. 1, No. 13. December 25, 1976.

[80]Gregory Baum in Faith and Fratricide, pp. 16-18.

meaningful in our contemporary world. Modern theology must be, and is, existentialist and personalist, and it must rethink all Christian doctrine in a fresh way. The tension between history and eschatology must be reconsidered just as it was in the formative days of patristic theology.[81] As the Church Fathers struggled to hold together creation and redemption, so we too must endeavour to overcome dualities and to affirm that "salvation does not alienate us from ourselves, but restores us to our true selves". We must insist on the eschatological and cosmological unity, the unity of creation and redemption that rejects flight from this universe.[82] But while traditional incarnational theology tended to emphasize the divinity of humankind, modern theology must, in a mood of messianic and this-earthly hope, stress the humanity of God.[83]

Ruether's christology is one which is characterised by concreteness and by a contextual quality. She understands Christ as a symbol of the God-man relation, as an anthropological myth or paradigm. Jesus is where we see God;here she would echo the gospel of John. This concrete kind of thought leads Ruether to say, "(this)...kind of sacramental concept, I think,is really my basic christology, my basic understanding of revelation..."[84] Ruether has little positive to say

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[81] Church Against Itself, pp. 89-90.

[82] Rosemary Ruether, "Paradoxes of Human Hope", Theological Studies, Vol. 33, No. 2, June 1972. p. 239.

[83] Ibid., p. 252.

[84] "Who Is Jesus? What Is the Church?" p. 6

about the gnostic influence on Christian thought. But she does feel that much is to be gained in christology, as well as in other areas, from a new, corrected, critical and re-vitalised understanding of the messianic dynamic of the Christian faith. Although messianism has been a source of dangers, it is also a continuing source of life and of hope for the future. A healthy concept of messiah could combine creation-affirming and world-negating elements and so express more fully what we mean by the Christ and the new creation.[85]

Very recently, in To Change The World, Ruether re-emphasizes her conviction that Jesus did not come to spiritualize ideas about the Kingdom. Instead, he went to the roots of the earthly to point out the deepest causes of oppression. Jesus did not name the Romans as villains, but looked beyond them to the "fundamental lust for domination"; he also gave, in his own leadership through service, a model for the community of the new day. Jesus did not wish merely to reverse domination, but to bring in a new age of peace, justice, and equity.[86]

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[85] "Paradoxes of Human Hope", pp. 249-252.
Douglas Hall suggests that a theology of the cross would aid in the theological restructuring of christology to which Ruether points. He agrees that triumphalism is the culprit, while suggesting that Ruether has ignored the alternative christological note of humiliation in historical theology. See "Rethinking Christ", Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity, (ed.) Alan Davies, New York: Paulist Press, 1979, pp. 168-175.

[86] Rosemary Ruether, To Change the World. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1981, pp. 15-17.
Ruether is completely conscious of the fact that how one sees the Christ is closely related to one's questions and contemporary values. She sees this "hermeneutical circle" as inevitable. For her, the question is of the meaning of the Christ within the context of justice and of the socio-political situation of humankind. Ibid., pp. 2-5.

For Ruether, the Christ is not merely past event, but rather messianic hope in our present day, whose complete coming is still ahead of us in the future.[87]

B. Some Definitions of Freedom in Rosemary Ruether

What does Rosemary Ruether mean by freedom? The key words and motifs in her work give us a fairly good idea. Freedom has a contemporary, here-and-now, political ring to it; it is a concept that bridges the gap between the secular and the religious. Ruether is preoccupied with the current social scene as a liberation thinker in the seventies, but her thinking about freedom is always rooted in her basic theological understanding. In being concerned with liberation, Ruether is giving practical expression to her theology. Therefore, we shall consider several definitions of freedom as understood by Rosemary Ruether; the significance of these terms is more than narrowly theological.

1. Freedom as wholeness

The way in which Ruether uses the words whole, wholeness and holistic does not always coincide with the usage of others. Wholeness might be described as completeness or healthiness, but although this is not incorrect, the dynamic and transcendent thrust of Ruether's concept is lost in this definition. Wholeness for Ruether is related to her concept of creation: it refers to the design and plan of God, the organic working together of humanity and nature. Wholeness is a term that implies for Ruether development and growth as well as inter-

[87] Ibid., p. 5.

relatedness throughout the entire community of life. Her concept of wholeness, like her concept of creation, is more vision than actuality; it refers to the "once and future" essential nature of the cosmos. Wholeness, for Ruether, has the transcendent element of the term holiness without meaning separation from the ordinary. Indeed, in her thinking, wholeness could be said to be integration of particular persons as well as of all creation in the intention of the Maker. Wholeness is like perfection except that it implies open-ended becoming and coordinated movement towards the goal of God's future. The philosophical word holism, defined as "tendency in nature to form wholes that are more than the sum of the parts by creative evolution", comes near, but leaves out the transcendent dimension so essential in Ruether's thought.[88]

Ruether's wholeness concept is based primarily on Hebraic, especially pre-exilic, religion which was a faith that combined socio-natural renewal (like Canaanite religion) with the transcendent dynamic. The sovereignty of God as creator is what binds together the community of life, both social and natural; the covenant relationship between God and people demands responsibility and respect towards the Lord and all of his/her creation.[89] God's sovereignty is very real, but the reign of God, the kingdom, is denied and cast aside by humankind. Fragmentation is how we experience the world, yet God's kingdom is there as original intention and reality developing from within the broken world.

[88] The Concise Oxford Dictionary, (eds.) H.W.Fowler and F.G.Fowler. Oxford: Clarendon, 1964.

[89] New Woman, New Earth, pp. 187-188.

God's sovereignty, wholeness, is; it is also becoming, because it involves a vision of what we are made to be and of what we indeed shall be. Wholeness, then, is creation in its dynamic and eschatological sense; it is another way of expressing the creation-redemption-new creation continuum. Hebraic wholeness is both reality and vision.

Wholeness for Ruether can perhaps be best understood by considering what it is not--dualistic polarisation, alienation, separation. Wholeness implies a struggle to overcome the fragmentation of a hostile and split-apart world; it means a radical restoration and a renewal which are nothing short of total revolution. The overcoming of present dividedness is necessary at all levels: the alienation of mind from body; the alienation from other human persons; the alienation from the earth and environment. Ruether adopts the body/soul split as her paradigm of oppression.[90]

Ruether consequently rejects the oppression/oppressed model which divides humanity into two opposing camps, implying that one is all right and the other is all wrong. The oppressor/oppressed model is a dualistic way of seeing reality which is not without value, but which inhibits the prophetic function of self-judgement. Ruether is suggesting something more radical than liberation through a change of ruling class; she is opposed to the whole model of domination-submission which apocalyptic (including Marxist) polarisation puts forward. Ruether believes firmly in the uprising of the poor and downcast to identity and to responsibility, but this is to be done in a

[90] Liberation Theology, pp. 16-17.

prophetic perspective of affirmation of universal humanity and of capacity for self-criticism.[91] The wholeness approach to liberation theology acknowledges the wrongness of human alienation, but keeps its eyes on the essential and hoped for common humanity, rather than simply going to war on the side of the oppressed. This does not mean that "wholeness"-based liberation theology is any the less serious in its encounter with injustice; it rather means that it tries to see beyond the present agenda of change to ultimate purpose. It is not human beings who are the final enemy, but the entire system built on the assumption that someone has to be "on top". Freedom as wholeness is the overcoming of the subject-object, domination-submission dualism.

Sexism is particularly helpful for understanding the body/soul paradigm of oppression that Ruether puts forward. Social oppression is a projection of body-soul (or subject-object) dualism; female-male alienation was the original model of this projection. Women have been viewed as "body", as physical objects, emotion without reason, often the embodiment of temptation and evil. Men have been seen as "soul", rational spirit, intelligence, morally superior, and therefore destined to be dominant. Classical Christian spirituality, as the carrier of concrete dualism, has imprinted humanity with this alienated model, making mutual and holistic relationship difficult if not impossible. Women are not the only group to be regarded as "object". Indeed, it is worth noting that oppressed peoples acquire similar labels, such as

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[91] Ibid., pp. 10-16.

"irrational", "emotional", "dirty", and "bad". Ruether defines the enemy not as men, but as the dualist way of thinking and acting. Liberation from sexism, then, means a more integral understanding of the man-woman relationship as one of mutual help and partnership.[92]

Wholeness is more than simply human redemption; the devastation arising from alienated mentality also affects earth and environment. Domination thinking is behind the plunder and waste of the earth's resources; it is also behind the war-machine which threatens global pollution as well as human extinction. Unbridled technology assumes that resources are to be used and exploited, nature and dead matter to be manipulated. Ruether, like Marcuse and Mumford, sees the domination syndrome as immensely dangerous, leading to the destruction of the universe.[93] Her understanding of wholeness means an organic way of seeing the relation of humanity and nature, an interdependent community of all living things. Ruether adopts Marcuse's motif "cultivate the garden" as the paradigm of the ideal relationship of humankind to nature:[94] a working with the earth, bringing order and knowledge to its aid. Ruether, however, always approaches creation from a theistic point of view. Human drive to be a god, infinite and unlimited, has been the original and constant ruin of creation.[95]

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[92] Liberation Theology, pp. 19-22.

[93] "Paradoxes of Human Hope", p. 241.
Also see: Lewis Mumford, The Myth of the Machine and the Pentagon of Power. New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1970.
And also: Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man. London: 1964.

[94] Marcuse, Ibid., p. 240.

[95] For example, see: "Paradoxes of Human Hope", pp. 251-252.
Also: New Woman, New Earth, p. 211.

In the fight for a truly holistic revolution, Ruether suggests that women might well have special contributions to make. Women are a caste within every class and nation, and therefore they partake not only of their own struggle for freedom as women, but also of the concerns and agenda of their race or nation. As such, they might provide a meeting point, a place of creative dialogue between the two seemingly opposing revolutionary forces of our day: the socio-political efforts of the poor and underdeveloped peoples and the human fulfilment and ecological movements of the more affluent nations. Women might be well placed to understand and bring about understanding of the interstructuring of various kinds of oppression, to learn and to teach how no one can be really free until all are free.[96] Women are in a good position to humanise and to reintegrate society through values they have learned in their experience: the importance of giving mutual support, perceptiveness of one's emotions, creativeness, co-operation, the benefit of play and celebration. Women might redeem humanity from the enslavement to alienated labour through bringing about an understanding that work is not the measure of our existence, but rather a creative expression of what we are.[97]

Holistic thinking in Ruether also has implications for how one might think about God. The Father God image has been an authoritarian, dominating one which pictures the Father as a parent who never allows

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[96] Liberation Theology, p. 124.
Also: Rosemary Ruether, "Male Chauvinist Theology and the Anger of Women". Crosscurrents, Spring, 1971.

[97] Rosemary Ruether, "Home and Work: Women's Roles and the Transformation of Values". Theological Studies, Vol. 36, No. 4. Dec. 1975.

his children to define themselves and to grow up. Yet Ruether feels that a "mother and father" God, although this has been current in some feminist circles, would only serve to preserve the dualistic polarity between male and female attributes. Ruether suggests that a more holistic concept of God might be to understand God as the divine matrix. This is not very different from Paul Tillich's idea of God as "ground of all being". Dualisms of body and mind, nature and spirit, would cease in a concept of God, the divine matrix, as source of our continual being and becoming, empowering us to be freely ourselves. The divine matrix is not a static concept of God, but one of movement, renewal, and continual creation. Creation and redemption are held together in this concept which considers God as the inexhaustible source of new life and authentic existence. The divine matrix is personal in being the ground of our personal existence and affirmation; God does not separate us from ourselves, but enriches and strengthens us as we go on our way. Ruether feels that probably we should learn to think of God in concrete and contextual terms rather than abstracts. This would unite physical perceptions with intellectual understanding to conceptualise what God means to us. Such a uniting of body and spirit is what a theology of wholeness is about.[98]

2. Freedom as mutuality

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[98] Rosemary Ruether, "Sexism and God-Talk". Photocopied from Ruether's then unpublished article. December, 1976. pp. 9-10.
See also: New Woman, New Earth, p. 211.
And: Rosemary Ruether, "Crisis in Sex and Race". Christianity and Crisis, April 15, 1974. p. 73.

Freedom, in Ruether, is a pattern of relationship, mutuality. Human beings are not created as isolated units, but in and through families, as a part of a people. Wholeness is closely related to mutuality; mutuality is the relational side of what wholeness means. Ruether is particularly emphatic about mutuality as a life style between women and men. But she is concerned with sharing and cooperation in all human relations.

Equal diversity within unity is what mutuality means. This is a difficult concept for Western minds which have been shaped by an either-or mentality which is dependent on underlying dualistic thinking. Dualism promotes the notion that differences are opposites, that hostility, or at least separation, exists between them, and that one is superior to or dominant over the other. Rather than being mutually enhancing, differences tend to threaten those who have internalised a split view of reality. Ruether speaks of the problem of particularism and universalism which have been falsely seen as exclusive alternatives, but which in fact should be seen as corollaries. She sees a positive relationship between particularism and universalism, difference and unity, in Hebraic thinking which bases the unity of humankind on the universality of the Creator God rather than on ideas of human beings about ways of salvation or types of revelation. It is a universality which is the supporting ground of each particularism, granting to each people the integrity of their own identities.[99] Diversity in unity is an organic model of existence; it employs the living body of many members as its paradigm.

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[99] Faith and Fratricide, pp. 236-239.

A new style of relationships is needed between women and men. This might be termed reciprocity or partnership. It is a sharing of the world and of life rather than a division of it into complementary sectors. Men and women are to engage in work and home responsibilities together, mutually encouraging each other to grow and to develop fully as persons.[100] This style is one of dialogue and communication, not of uniform sameness between women and men. Intimacy is based on joint creative activity, growth, and struggle: "it is possible only when people are colleagues as well as lovers, who share life and work in a quest to give birth to each other's fullest selves."[101] Sometimes the term androgyny is used to describe the hoped for model of relationships. But this word is inadequate because of its dualistic sources. New words and concrete expressions are needed to speak about the relationship between whole, fully developed and healthy persons who can be interdependent without being dominating or overdependent. It is difficult to envisage woman-man relations when the distortions of projection, suppression, and false alienations are overcome. But this is what is meant by freedom in Ruether: probably the best expression of this vision is mutuality.[102] Relationships of mutuality and partnership between men and women might point the way to more co-operative styles of working and living together in other spheres, new styles of govern-

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[100]Rosemary Ruether, Mary--the Feminine Face of the Church. Crawford, Indiana: Geneva Press, 1976.

[101]Machismo to Mutuality, p. 85.

[102]New Woman, New Earth, p. 26.

ment and church life.[103] Ruether points to job-sharing as one expression of practical mutuality whereby both partners can have the advantages of work and leisure spheres, and whereby both can participate more fully in home life.[104]

Mutuality is not to be confused with the idea of complementarity. Such a doctrine assumes a kind of co-operation, but also involves a separation of roles and attributes. In the complementarity theory, women and men are seen as half persons who must have each other to be complete. Therefore, complementarity ascribes opposite characteristics and functions to men and women, thus robbing them both of the totality of their human possibility. Obvious genital and procreative complementarity is falsely carried over into the psychological, social, and vocational spheres, thereby limiting the wholesome course of individual development as well as hindering the creation of common areas of interest and concern between the sexes. Mutuality, on the other hand, insists that mature relationship is between complete persons who need each other to encourage their wholeness and to continue their full development rather than stunt a half of it. Mutuality does not eliminate differences between persons, but sets human beings free from limiting sex role definitions which make authentic individual uniqueness impossible. Ruether feels that the theory of complementarity is based on a sado-masochistic view of relationship which functions to

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[103]Rosemary Ruether, Liberating Bond. New York: Friendship Press, 1978. p. 59.

[104]Rosemary Ruether, "Toward New Solutions: Working Women and the Male Workday." Christianity and Crisis, February 7, 1977, pp. 3-8.

perpetuate dependency and underdevelopment of all human beings, and thus ensures the continual inferiority of women.[105]

Where does one start to live in mutual relationship as men and women? We begin by resurrecting repressed parts of our real selves, not by leaving all responsibility for change to legislation. We begin by overcoming the fear we have of real love and intimacy (which is so often denied to us by the polarisation of roles) through accepting ourselves. We begin by understanding our projections of our inadequacies onto the other. We begin, in a word, with confession and with the willingness to make a new beginning.[106] Ruether suggests that women and men might move toward mutuality from opposite directions. Women must discover their own self-definitions, their rationality, and their autonomy. Men need to learn how to be supportive, gentle, and in touch with their own emotions.[107] Eugene Bianchi would add from a masculine point of view that liberation begins when self-sufficiency is given up and one opens oneself to help and criticism from the other person. While women and men need to understand and accept themselves, the continuing conversation between them must go on.[108]

Another aspect of the quest for mutuality is the recovery of unity between the individual and the group. Dualism has resulted in a false kind of individualism and in the privatism of religion at the expense of

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[105] Machismo to Mutuality, pp. 82-84.

[106] Bianchi, Ibid., pp. 100-101.

[107] New Woman, New Earth, p. 28

[108] Bianchi, Machismo to Mutuality, p. 131.

meaningful community and the corporate and social aspects of faith. The communal impulse is a significant part of what mutuality and liberation mean for Ruether.[109]

Again and again, Ruether stresses the need for co-operation and for the abolition of competitive systems. Ruether is constantly opposed to hierarchy which is an expression of dualism and makes some more important than others. Mutuality, and hence freedom, mean for Ruether a co-operative society of equals where all serve each other.[110]

Ruether's concept of ministry is related to her concern for mutuality. She has a community-centred doctrine of ministry, in which service is simply the expression of the people's life together before God. Ruether does not accept hierarchical structures of church office as valid, just as she does not see God as a domineering parent. Rather, the Holy Spirit's activity in the local community to generate spontaneous service is central to her theories of Christian ministry.[111] The ordination of women has a special significance for Ruether as a potential challenge to the entire hierarchical structure of organisation which she understands to be based on sexist dualism. Women ministers should alter the shape of church leadership by rejecting paternalistic and dominating modes of ministry so as to bring about a dialogue form of mutual service where the talents and skills of all are encouraged and used. Christian leadership has the task of building community, and

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[109] Liberation Theology, pp. 7-9.

[110] See, for example, Mary--Feminine Face of the Church, p. 36.

[111] New Woman, New Earth, pp. 80-81.

here women have special abilities developed through their experience of being mothers, nurturers, and those who have had much responsibility for human relations in society.[112] However, it is this special contribution that ordained women have to make that is so threatening to the status quo of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Ordained women are threatening because they implicitly call into question relations of domination-submission and challenge the divisions between clergy and laity, even although most are only subconsciously aware of the depth of the threat. Women who are ordained will also be tempted to buy into the system by assuming a paternalistic, clerical mentality, but they will find this increasingly incongruous as they gain in numbers and in self-confidence.[113] However, the service of the whole community is not to be thought of as servitude. Women, for example, are to be Christian servants, but not slaves: they have been given the power of ministry to use freely for and with others. Servanthood implies free responsibility and participation in decision-making as well as self-giving.[114]

Ruether's God is the Lord of many peoples, each with their special relationship and uniqueness. Mutuality means pro-existence in the lordship of the Creator, far beyond rivalry or attempts to dominate.[115] Ruether cannot think of God as over against us; rather, God's power and transcendence are the basis of all created life and being. Mutuality

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[112]"Male Clericalism and the Dread of Women", p. 18.

[113]New Woman, New Earth, pp. 79-80.

[114]Mary--the Feminine Face of the Church, pp. 35-36.

[115]Liberating Bond, p. 91.

is freedom because in and through each other we know God. With God we also serve humankind and are co-creators of the new heaven and new earth.[116]

3. Freedom as participation in the people of the promise.

Freedom for Rosemary Ruether is a communal event. The journey towards freedom can never be undertaken alone. Liberating community is not an end in itself, but it is essential for awareness and movement towards God's future. Ruether might be considered a "theological extrovert". Perhaps it is her womanliness that has so underlined the social relations and interplay which are involved in the family of humanity. Ruether's interest in the people of God is specific and concrete; she is not concerned with "people in general" although she believes in the universal humanity of people.

Whom does Ruether consider to be a part of the people of the promise? She is not exclusive in her concept of God, although she is particularist. The covenant relationship belongs to whosoever accepts it and lives honestly out of its hopes and its demands.[117] There is no tight ring drawn around the community; Ruether condemns tests of Christocentric orthodoxy which refuse to see God's revelation and messianic spirit at work amongst all sorts of people. God is there wherever liberation is happening, wherever the messianic mandate is taken up to work together towards a new humanity.[118] Some might find

[116] Mary--the Feminine Face of the Church, p. 33.

[117] Liberating Bond, p. 91.

[118] Liberation Theology, pp. 190-191.

Ruether vague as to who are the true believers; she would be more impressed with fidelity of life and action than with correctly formulated belief. She speaks of specific experiences of eschatological community amidst civil rights protests in Mississippi and amongst those struggling for human dignity. These events of community are not often programmed ones, but are unexpected happenings that celebrate the meaning of being the people of risk and promise.[119]

In Communion Is Life Together Ruether spells out the meaning of the eucharist in terms of the story of God's people, Israel. This story of exodus and covenant is not just a tale of long ago, but more profoundly it is our experience too. In this story, of who we are as a community, we find not only our roots but also our goal. The messianic banquet is the motif that sets out the promise before us; it is a corporate and universal gathering of all humanity in the new age of God's reign. This banquet is anticipated wherever, now, two or three come together for the sake of God's kingdom.[120] The people of God are not a momentary phenomenon; they are a permanent reality with a past and a future.

Home and the family are matters of considerable importance to Ruether. She is a strong believer in both interrelatedness and democratic autonomy. Therefore, the home is important to her not only as a centre of permanent nurture and support, but also as one of the few places where persons can organise and run their own lives in their own

[119]See "The Church is a 'Happening'", Church Against Itself, Chapter 9.

[120]Communion Is Life Together, pp. 4-6, 44-48.

way. There is something wrong with the modern nuclear family, but it is in its isolation and ever more restricted nature that the problem lies. Family is essential (and Ruether means by this community of adults and children), but family needs to be extended in its scope and opened up to be more inclusive and encouraging of healthy growth. New patterns of 'extended families' need to be developed to give persons a broader base of stability and community.[121] Ruether sees maternity as woman's strength rather than her weakness: the nurturing ability to encourage and to give autonomous life to others is the "first power". The "mother power" has been used against woman and falsely belittled; indeed, it is awe and fear of this original power and mystery that promoted the rise of misogynist patriarchy. Women, Ruether feels, must reject contempt for women and motherhood, and should not abandon the maternal role which needs to be re-understood and given new value. Nurturing needs to be seen as important.[122] But cosy, inward-looking intimacy is not an adequate basis for marriage and family relationship. People today are searching for community which is based on commitment and responsibility (rather than the elusive sex/love basis of the romantic ideal);they are seeking ways of integrating religious contemplation, personal growth, and social transformation into the centre of their life together. Persons are drawn together through their mutual involvement and their common mission of

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[121] "Working Women and the Male Workday", p. 5.

[122] "Crisis in Sex and Race", p. 72.

service.[123] Ruether criticises the eroticisation and privatisation of the home, as well as the contemporary quest for instant intimacy through encounter groups, for being escapist. True community and communication are the product of work and life together in the real world in order to build a new tomorrow.[124]

Intentional communities are a frequent preoccupation of Ruether. In Radical Kingdom, she studies the history of utopianism, both Christian and socialist. The idea of a co-operative community life-style has often been associated with social reform throughout the ages. It has represented a protest or challenge to surrounding society and has tried to incorporate ideal types of social relationships.[125] Ruether also studies the contemporary fate of the religious orders which appear to be vanishing; yet the original eschatological mandate for life together amidst risk and commitment is bringing into being new expressions of community of faith and vision. At the same time as there is a realisation that the nuclear family is too narrow a unit, there is also an emerging awareness that institutional celibacy is not an adequate way of expressing love, responsibility, and commitment together in the world. There is, as a result, a new impetus towards religious communalism.[126] Certainly not all contemporary craving for communal living is religious, nor is it all particularly responsible.

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[123] Liberation Theology, pp. 46-49.

[124] Machismo to Mutuality, p. 52.

[125] Radical Kingdom, Chapter 4, pp. 55-74.

[126] Liberation Theology, Chapter 3, pp. 39-49.

But there is today an authentic movement of search for a simple life together which is based on harmony with the earth and with humankind (as opposed to technological age exploitation of them). This "new asceticism" recovers communal roots in affirmation of creation rather than repression of it. This striving, even though often imperfect, is for wholeness and healing and Ruether sees it as implicitly religious even when it is not explicitly so. Once more, Ruether refuses to draw lines around those whom she considers to be the people of the promise.[127]

If Ruether speaks less often of the institutional church as the years go on, she talks more often about "communitarian socialism" as an ideal for life together in the light of transcendence. But the two social forms are not without relation: she notes a parallel in the proper relationship between church/intentional community and society. Ideally, the relationship is dialectical, one of being in and for the world, yet not of it. Ideally, both church and intentional community feel a mission of service and transformation towards the world at large; they both have a prophetic function.[128] But both can become narrow and inward-looking when they come to regard themselves as ends in themselves; they can only truly exist by reaching out beyond themselves to give hope and renewal, as well as judgement, to the world.[129]

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[127] Ibid., pp. 32-36.

[128] Ibid., pp. 154-155.

[129] Liberating Bond, p. 52.

Communitarian socialism, Ruether states, is a democratic, non-totalitarian, way of sharing the means of life. It means the development of local communities in which all would have voice and responsibility. Individuals would regain more control over their own lives than under the present capitalist system; the family would be enriched and extended rather than eliminated or denigrated. The Kibbutz and various forms of Christian communitarianism, even residential colleges, might furnish some ideas about what such a form of living in community would be like. Economy would be decentralised, much of production happening within the local community; thus home and work would again be in organic relationship. Work would be communalised and both men and women would share in worldly and homely tasks. Freed from role stereotyping and alienated labour, persons would become more integrated and would find new ways to be uniquely themselves.[130]

Ruether's social vision is also a spiritual one. It is one which has to do with redemption, with liberation of persons from individualism and from totalitarianism. It has to do with a profound respect for creation and an awareness of the present threat of possible annihilation or complete pollution of the good earth. There is an urgency in the ecological situation as well as in the global justice area which make communitarian socialism an imperative of creative and redemptive caring. It is a letting go of the wish for unlimited ego achievement and of a competitive, aggressive way of living; it is a

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[130] New Woman, New Earth, pp. 207-211.
Also: Machismo to Mutuality, pp. 111-112.

way of losing oneself to find oneself in solidarity with others and with the earth. Communitarian socialism is, for Ruether, the road to global justice and ecological harmony, to equalisation of the world's resources and opportunities. Ruether preserves a strong sense of the transcendent in her social theory; transcendence is both goal and ground of being.[131]

There are hints in Ruether's work that she sees immortality in purely corporate terms. When Ruether speaks of the matrix of being which is our source and goal, she acknowledges life beyond this worldly life. But preoccupation with the overcoming of individual death is one facet of competitive creation-exploiting mentality; it is trying to be God, to be infinite. Ruether rather emphasises the future glory of the peoples; nevertheless, one is left with the impression that she does not infer an anti-personal hereafter, but rather one which is more personal than we can imagine it. Freedom is promised to the people.[132]

4. Freedom as Struggle towards the Future

Why is it that a theologian who stresses the goodness of creation and the renewal of harmony with the earth is also one who has a sense

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[131] Liberation Theology, p. 153.
Also: Machismo to Mutuality, pp. 111-112.
And also: New Woman, New Earth, pp. 210-211.

[132] Rosemary Ruether, "Persecution of Witches: A Case of Sexism and Agism". Christianity and Crisis, December 23, 1974. p. 295.
Also: New Woman, New Earth, p. 211.
And: Rosemary Ruether, "Beginnings: An Intellectual Autobiography". Journeys. (ed) Gregory Baum. New York: Paulist Press, 1975. pp. 38-39.

of urgent thrust and struggle towards the final goal? Perhaps one might have expected a more placid theology from Ruether. This might be because we have been accustomed to thinking of nature-centred religion as "static". Ruether does indeed see a need for re-evaluation, and renewed use, of systems of belief based on awe and reverence for the mystery of birth and new life. But her idea of the divine matrix is a dynamic concept of change and growth.[133] Ruether does not see "creation" or "nature" as a finished work, but as something in which there is movement and direction. Humanity is not seen as passive witness to God's work in the world, but rather as potential co-creator with God. To her concept of creation as process or development, Ruether adds that of an eschatology which is already present as the "power of New Being", our growing edge towards what we are meant to be. Ruether's two concepts of dynamic creation and imminent eschatology leave us with little room for content with the status quo; they imply struggle and effort on our part. Personhood is taking part in the bringing to birth of new creation.[134]

Struggle is not freedom; it is the nearest thing to it, however, which we have in this world. This is because struggle is an impatience with non-freedom, a movement towards this goal. It is in the midst of struggle that we find each other as the people of the promise and this is where we see most clearly the vision of how things ought to be, of wholeness and of mutuality. The hopefulness, the ecstatic expectation

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[133] See for example: "Sexism and God-Talk".

[134] Church Against Itself, p. 210.

which accompany struggle are the nearest human beings can come to knowing complete freedom. This is the proleptic foretaste of the ultimate future which blesses and makes significant present life. In the struggle, one affirms faith and is saved by hope despite the discouraging nature of existing possibilities. Ruether recalls the vivid description by Paul in Romans, chapter eight, of the labour pains of the new creation.[135] It might be an especially feminine perspective that new life is born through intense travail; possibly women would tend more often to see suffering as a part of giving birth to newness.

Ruether would see the tension between "ought" and "is" from a messianic perspective. Dialectic is ultimately endless and frustrating. Messianic perspective means, for Ruether, a transformation of the "is" from within by infusing it with an awareness of the "ought". Ruether suggests, therefore, a kind of synthesis as the means of struggle. Synthesis is always partial, yet this is what it is to be finite and historical. The messianic perspective suggests that changes in how things are can happen and, indeed, must happen. But this perspective also recognises the relative nature of reforms which make constant striving and new syntheses necessary. Messianic struggle is neither withdrawal from the system nor conformity to it. Struggle is the transforming of the opposition from the midst of it.[136]

To live in hope through the name of Jesus, means, for Ruether, being caught up with him in lively expectation of the coming of God's

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[135] Radical Kingdom, p. 288.

[136] Ibid., pp. 216-217.

reign. Jesus is the embodiment, for us, of the messianic perspective, of what it means to struggle within and for the world for the sake of new creation. But Jesus is not in himself the final messianic age; he is proclamation of a coming day. Thus the resurrection is the reaffirming of the validity of Jesus' hope, of messianic hope, even in the face of historical disaster and apparent defeat. In the resurrection, we experience the final future, not the past.[137]

Transformation and synthesis are key notes of Ruether's contemporary analysis of struggle. She sees, for example, counter-cultures as having potential for redemption of ideology and lifestyle. Yet this potential can only be realised as an effort is made by the counter-culture to transform the surrounding society while at the same time retaining its separate identity.[138] Ruether also sees the goal of the women's movement not as securing more power or dominance for itself, but as doing away with oppression and domination altogether. Women are not against men, but for whole, mutual and unalienated co-humanity.[139] The task goes beyond confrontation and critical comment; transformation involves a making of new persons, a compassionate way of being for what even one's opponents could become. Ruether sees clearly the limitations of moral outrage and confrontational dialectic in the practical situation. Prophecy is necessary, but growth is also essential for real transformation to-

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[137] Faith and Fratricide, pp. 248-249.
See also: To Change the World, p. 5.

[138] Liberation Theology, pp. 34-35.

[139] Machismo to Mutuality, pp. 116-117.

wards the future.[140] Struggle, therefore, in Ruether, is not merely conflict, but is also the pains of growth on the way to tomorrow.

5. Freedom as Salvation

If one could summarise in one word what freedom means, in the work of Rosemary Ruether, I think that one would have to say that freedom means salvation. Salvation is not a word that Ruether herself uses often. It has, at times, a pious and old-fashioned overtone of individual and emotional withdrawal from the real world. But such is not the sense in which one could speak of salvation in connection with Rosemary Ruether's work. Rather, it is in the context of the Hebraic tradition and the Hebraic understanding of humanity that freedom as salvation is meaningful. Salvation as original purpose, and eschatological goal; salvation as wholeness of body, spirit, mind; salvation as the working together of all things in heaven and in earth for good; salvation as cooperative and harmonious society; salvation as covenant community--this is the sense in which we can talk about freedom as salvation in Rosemary Ruether. Like the word freedom, salvation is a term full of ambiguities and promises; it means complete deliverance from barriers and limitations as well as complete actualisation of created potential. Freedom, like salvation, is the ultimate vision of which we see hopeful glimmers in the present.

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[140] Rosemary Ruether, "Beyond Confrontation". The Berrigans. (ed.) William VanEtten Casey, S.J. and Philip Noble. New York: Avon, 1971. pp. 113-120.

C. Ruether's Freedom in the Context of Feminist Theology

Feminist theology is not well known in Britain. It has been a development of the late sixties and the seventies, mainly, although not entirely, in the United States of America. Feminist theology's advent has been in many ways parallel to the arrival on the scene of black theology. It is related to the more general movement for women's liberation at this time, but it also has its roots in the mood of questioning ecclesiastical assumptions, and in the opening of the ministry and of theological education to women. Feminist theology has a broad spectrum of viewpoints; feminist theologians can be left-wing radicals or conservative evangelicals or something in between. They are Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish in tradition. They write or speak to various questions and backgrounds; some are professional theologians, others working pastors, still others dedicated lay persons. The range of study is as vast as that of theology itself; feminists explore biblical material as well as the philosophical, systematic and historical fields, besides being involved in ethics, liturgy, and other dimensions of practical theology. Perhaps one might want to describe feminist theology as a "feminist perspective on religious studies" rather than as a monolithic school of thought. Certainly there is great divergence and disagreement between women theologians on most of the customarily central points in theology. What feminist theologians do have in common is their desire to bring their experience as women to bear on the meaning and practice of faith. Since virtually all theology and church authority has been dominated by men until very recently, feminist theologians are eager to ask whether there is a

womanly way of understanding the faith which needs to be developed; they are aware of the inadequacies of a theological viewpoint from which their participation has been excluded, and they seek to make a positive contribution to wholeness.

Despite diverse backgrounds and situations, feminist theologians share a number of areas of concern and agreement. They believe in contextual theologising and in a communal process. Feminist theology is often the work of groups or collectives; often it is not published, but circulated through the grapevine or 'oral tradition'. This communal working together is undertaken by women of varying academic training since experience and commitment are of the essence; however, this does not mean that academic achievement is disregarded. But feminist theology is strongly egalitarian and cooperative in its approach; it is supportive in its method and in its goals. Sheila Collins notes two types of feminist theologians: first, there are the reformers who attempt correction of the traditional Judeo-Christian ideas, practices, and values; second, there is a revolutionary minority who have rejected the Judeo-Christian structure of belief entirely.[141] Ruether is probably more reformer than she is revolutionary.

Rosemary Ruether is, in many ways, an exceptional person amongst feminist theologians. She was a professional theologian of some standing even before feminist theology came along. Even if she had not become involved with women's theology, she would still have been a theo-

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[141] Sheila Collins, A Different Heaven and Earth. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 1974. pp. 40-45.
See also: Christ, Carol and Plaskow, Judith, (eds.), Womanspirit Rising, New York: Harper & Row, 1979. pp. 9-11.

logical force of considerable magnitude. She had gained competence in an area of study which extremely few women had entered, and she had gained a place for herself in academic circles. Perhaps, in one sense, it might be surprising that she should become involved with women's liberation; there is a tendency for those who have "made it" to disparage the needs and frustrations of those who have not. Indeed, one wonders if Ruether did not fear for her reputation as a serious scholar in becoming involved in the fledgling efforts of women in theology.

Yet, Ruether is completely at home in feminist theology. She has been amazingly consistent with the thoughts and aims of other women. She was well prepared, probably, by her constant preoccupation with the Christian community and by her study of the sources of Western culture. Ruether's identity as a historical theologian comes through in her work; she uses personal and subjective references less often than many of her feminist colleagues. Although Ruether has her uniqueness in her focus on apocalyptic and gnostic dualism as the key to the situation, her vision of what freedom means is strikingly similar to that of other women.[142]

Wholeness might well be called the theme song of all of feminist theology. Probably the classic statement (and one of the most often quoted) of the wholeness motif was that made by Nelle Morton at the Berlin Consultation on Women in Church and Society, called by the

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[142]For the personal roots and intellectual development of Ruether's feminism, see: "The Question of Feminism", Disputed Questions: On Being A Christian, Nashville: Abingdon, 1982. Chapter 4.

World Council of Churches in 1975. Her working paper, "Towards a Whole Theology", is extremely close to Ruether's thinking although Morton does not appear to have used Ruether as one of her sources. Wholeness means for Morton, "oneness of body and mind, a oneness with one another in our helplessness....putting back together history and nature...."[143] The British feminist, Una Kroll, understands wholeness as a vision, as total perfection, as what freedom might mean. More Christocentric than Ruether, she takes the cross with its unity of vertical and horizontal dimensions as a paradigm of what wholeness means.[144] Sheila Collins stresses "the ethic of wholeness" as implied by Old Testament creation narrative, New Testament gospel, and the feminist movement alike. Collins sees wholeness as vision:

> "The vision represents the yearning to be fully human and to be fully in touch with the ground of one's being. It is rooted in existentiality and tethered to transcendence. It is the yearning to be a self-actualized subject rather than an other-defined object."[145]

Letty Russell, like Ruether, finds meaning in Hebraic thought; Russell's concept of shalom is the equivalent of Ruether's wholeness idea, and Russell identifies shalom with liberation and blessing, as a corporate event.[146] Many feminists are aware of the dualism which is projected

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[143]Nelle Morton, "Towards a Whole Theology". Available from World Council of Churches, 150 Route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.

[144]Una Kroll, Flesh of My Flesh. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd., 1975. pp. 100-102.

[145]Sheila Collins, op.cit. pp. 176-177.

[146]Letty Russell, Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976. pp. 106-111.

onto the sexes, although Ruether deals with this area in greater detail and from the perspective of historical theology. The French existentialist and feminist, Simone de Beauvoir, was one of the first to appreciate the effect of considering woman as "the Other".[147] At the "Women and Theology Conference", Grailville, Ohio, 1972, women theologians considered the realities of polarity, alienation, and brokenness and tried to envisage the meaning of wholeness. This was done by using diagrams which indicated the overcoming of fragmentation by moving towards models of "both-and-ness", inter-relatedness and inter-dependence. In these drawings, wholeness looks like an atom--circles of being held in unity by the nucleus; this contrasts with the hierarchy model or the model of hostility.[148]

Mutuality is often a part of what other feminist theologians see as ideal. In the mid-sixties, before feminist theology had become a part of the American theological scene, Francine Dumas, a Frenchwoman, explored the tension for the sexes between difference and similarity. She saw that diversity with similarity was necessary to the formation of a human community (as opposed to a biological group) which could both communicate and be creative. This tension of being the same but different has often been difficult for humanity to understand and to practise. But it is this tension which produces dialogue and creative

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[147] Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, Penguin Books, 1972. pp. 20-25. Le Deuxième Sexe, first published 1949.

[148] "Women and Theology Conference", Grailville Community, Loveland, Ohio, June 18-25, 1972, as reported in Sheila Collins, op.cit., p. 225. Materials and reports available from Service Center, Church Women United, Box 37815, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45237, U. S. A.

co-operation. Mutuality is such a creative tension and has great potential as well as possible dangerous distortions.[149] The revolutionary feminist, Mary Daly, spoke of the partnership of women and men within the Church as a goal in her first book. But she later retracted this as she indicates in the introduction to the second edition.[150] Daly's rather violent and hostile stance towards "maledom" is extremely different from Ruether's, and indeed from that of most other feminist theologians. Russell, Morton, deBeauvoir, Kroll, Scanzoni and Hardesty, among many others, come out strongly for the mutuality and partnership of women and men.[151] Feminist theologians, as a whole, understand various types of oppression as inter-related. There is, however, some difference of opinion as to the relative importance of different kinds of domination. Ruether would refuse to say that one form of slavery is more crucial than another; Daly would see sexism as the "final cause".[152]

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[149] Francine Dumas, Man and Woman: Similarity and Difference. Geneva: W.C.C., 1966. pp. 8-15. Translation by Margaret House.

[150] Mary Daly, The Church and the Second Sex. (with A New Feminist Post-Christian Introduction). New York: Harper and Row, 1975. See chapter seven, and introduction, pp. 41-46.

[151] Letty Russell, op.cit., especially, pp. 145-155.
Nelle Morton, op. cit.
Simone deBeauvoir, op.cit., especially conclusion, pp. 725-741.
Una Kroll, op.cit., especially chapter seven, pp. 89-100
Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, All We're Meant to Be. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1974. See especially chapter seven, pp. 73-87.

[152] Rosemary Ruether, "Crisis in Sex and Race". Christianity and Crisis, April 15, 1974. pp. 70-71.
Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973. pp. 179-198.

Community is a common interest of feminists. It is in coming together that women have found the support and encouragement necessary to challenge the assumption of their inferiority. Sisterhood amongst female theologians has meant the emergence of a new communal way of doing theology in which the idea is group participation rather than individual star performers. All feminist theologians admit their need of others, their solidarity in disadvantage. Most "reforming" feminist theologians have stayed within the church while being aware of its faults and limitations. The "revolutionaries" have mainly left the Christian fold, often in "exodus communities". Although Ruether is not ultimately concerned about the institutional church, she is eager to remain a part of the covenant community of believers and this community is one of both men and women.[153] Daly, predictably, sees sisterhood as substitute church or anti-church.[154] Although feminists have a tendency towards socialism, towards collective living, and communal action, Ruether develops her concept of communitarian socialism more explicitly and more politically than other feminist theologians. Ruether's theology is political theology as well as being communal theology.

The theme of struggle towards the future is common to many liberation thinkers, including feminists. Often, feminists use the imagery of "journey".[155] Ruether's eschatological perspective corresponds to

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[153] Ruether, Machismo to Mutuality, pp. 114-116.

[154] Daly, Beyond God the Father, pp. 155-169.

[155] See for example, Russell, op.cit., pp. 25-27. Also Kroll, op.cit., p. 100

something similar in the strong feeling of "vision" or "androgynous utopia" in other writers. There is a dream-like quality to feminist projections of what the ideal future will be like, something beyond mere human possibility and imagination. Indeed, one could say that there is a strong messianic dimension in feminist theology; there is a glimpse of the hoped for future which beckons one on, here and now, to make concrete changes while living in anticipation.[156] The understanding of Jesus constitutes a point of difference between feminist theologians. While many feminists assume a Christocentric framework and declare Jesus to be woman's best friend, or affirm that Jesus is a feminist,[157] there is a tendency to emphasize the ideas of the Spirit and of Creator-creation rather more than has been the case in traditional theology. While Ruether refuses traditional definitions for who Jesus is and explores at depth the historical circumstances surrounding the acclamation of Jesus as the Christ, she acknowledges Jesus as a symbol of humanity's relationship with God, a paradigm of future hope.[158] Daly, more aggressively, condemns "christolatry". Ruether appreciates that, historically, Jesus Christ has often enslaved and divided rather than freed and united; yet she would say that Jesus will be the Christ at the end of time. For Daly, the

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[156]See, for example, Morton, op.cit. pp. 11-12.
Also Russell, op.cit. , pp. 41-49

[157]See, for example, Scanzoni and Hardesty, op.cit. pp. 54-59.

[158]For details of Ruether's Christology vis-a-vis feminism, see "Christology and Feminism: Can a Male Saviour Save Women?" To Change the World. London: SCM Press, 1981. Chapter IV.

eschatological event, the second coming, is to be one of female presence in the symbol of the Great Goddess. Daly rejects Jesus as a symbol of liberation.[159]

It is striking to read Jurgen and Elisabeth Moltmann's foreword to Letty Russell's book. The Moltmanns suggest that the ancient world's cry for salvation runs parallel to today's longing for liberation. Liberation theology seeks to respond to this yearning of modern humanity for freedom just as the early church spoke to its world about salvation.[160] For feminist theologians, freedom means salvation. Although there are vast differences between feminists, they would support Ruether's view of freedom as wholeness, mutuality, community and hope.

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[159]Daly, Beyond God the Father, pp. 69-97
Daly goes further in Gyn/Ecology (Boston: Beacon, 1978.) and creates an entirely new mythology that is gynocentric and post-Christian.

[160]Jurgen and Elisabeth Moltmann, in Human Liberation in Feminist Perspective, by Letty Russell, pp. 12-13.

CHAPTER THREE

FREEDOM: CONTRAST BETWEEN GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ AND ROSEMARY RUETHER

A. Gustavo Gutierrez in His Latin American Context

"Theology of liberation" in the Latin American context is, historically, a recent occurrence. The socio-political reality of Latin America's experience with poverty and neo-colonialism gave rise to a new mood of thought at the Consultation of Latin American bishops at Medellin (CELAM II) in 1968. Until this time, the predominant terms for dealing with the Latin American reality were under-development and development. But the realisation that the true problem of Latin America's poverty is one of dependence meant that one began to speak of the need for liberation. At Medellin, a positive break with traditional language and thought was made when the conference expressed the continent's need for "liberating education" and "conscientization."[1] Out of this change in direction at Medellin came wide-spread efforts in Latin America to understand the Christian faith in terms of liberation. Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian priest, was the first to attempt to redefine and outline theology in the Latin American context of liberation in his A Theology of Liberation (Spanish edition, 1971; English 1973).[2] Gutierrez has come to be spoken of as "the doyen of the lib-

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[1]Hugo Assman. Theology for a Nomad Church. Trans. by Paul Burns. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976. pp. 45-46.

[2]Ibid., p. 51.

eration theologians."[3]

Gustavo Gutierrez was born in Peru in 1928. After secondary school in Lima, he began studies in medicine at the National University. But after five years of medical study, he changed his direction and began to study for the priesthood. Most of his theological study was in Europe, at Louvain (where he knew Camilo Torres well), at Lyon, and in Rome. Gutierrez has been a professor of theology in Lima, at the Catholic University, since his return to Latin America in 1960.[4] Meanwhile, his involvement and contacts with the poor of Lima have been strong, and it is from this active concern that Liberation Theology has emerged.[5]

Both Gutierrez and Ruether are Roman Catholics. Both were developing their liberation theologies at approximately the same time. While Gutierrez published Liberation Theology in 1971, Ruether put out her Liberation Theology in 1972, utilizing various articles written in 1971 and 1972. Although Ruether's Radical Kingdom (1970) does not treat Latin American theology, her thought is such that it would be a logical next step to go into exploring liberation theology in the Americas. It should not surprise us that The Radical Kingdom was published in Spanish in Buenos Aires in 1971.

While Gutierrez is a priest in a poor land, Ruether is a lay woman

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[3]Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (eds.), Theology in the Americas. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976. p. 274.

[4]Rosino Gibellini, Frontiers of Theology in Latin America. Trans. by John Drury. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979.

[5]Derek Winter, Hope in Captivity. London: Epworth Press, 1977. p. 27.

in a large and powerful nation. Ruether has always been an extremely independent-minded Roman Catholic, having studied and taught, for the most part, outside Catholic institutions. Gutierrez, on the other hand, as a priest, has been formed in a more traditional mould; he is more self-consciously Roman Catholic on a continent known for the Constantinian character of its church. Even so, Gutierrez was not appointed an adviser to the Latin American Bishops' Conference at Puebla in 1979.

It might be said that there is much in liberation theology which is scarcely new. Alfredo Fierro shows that the gospel message has often been seen as pointing to liberty, justice, and a priority for the poor. The theme of the poor as a locus of God's activity is as old as the faith itself. But Latin American theology of liberation today is based on the social experience of a dependent people who long for emancipation; it connects this emancipation with the work of Jesus Christ. This theology is not only about or for the poor, it is meant to be the voice of the oppressed themselves.[6] In the Latin American situation this means a declaring of theological responsibility for the articulation of the meaning of the Christian faith in this context by Latin Americans themselves. Those within this situation of oppression are thereby assuming the right and duty of defining and putting into practice a dynamic Christian faith of deliverance.

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[6]Alfredo Fierro, The Militant Gospel. Trans. by John Drury. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1977. pp. 189-193.

B. Gutierrez and Ruether: Points of Contact

1. The Priority of the Poor

Perhaps the most striking and obvious point of contact between Gutierrez and Ruether is their common admission of a positive bias, an advocacy perspective. Both would claim that theology cannot be unbiased and that indeed much of the so-called "objective" theology of the traditional sort has in fact been a support of the political and social status quo.[7] Both would say that their theology is rooted in their commitment and involvement, that it is reflection on the practice of their faith.[8] Both Ruether and Gutierrez, therefore, are talking theologically about their contexts, as a woman and as a Latin American. Both are 'theologians with a difference' who, because they are what they are (a woman and a Peruvian), would have found it virtually impossible to be recognised and respected theological thinkers in an earlier era. Who they are has much to do with what they are saying; they are both involved in articulating theologically the meaning of hope, faith and love for those who have been marginalised from dominant Western culture. Gutierrez understands faith (and theology) as unavoidably connected with transforming involvement with others.[9] He further underlines that liberation is not struggling simply for others, but rather a recognition of one's own oppression and alienation

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[7]Rosemary R. Ruether, New Woman, New Earth, p. xii.

[8]Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, Trans. by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson. London: S.C.M. Press, 1974, p. 11.

[9]Ibid.

which allows one to identify totally with those who are oppressed. Self-liberation is an essential dimension of the transforming struggle for human freedom.[10]

Not only do both Gutierrez and Ruether admit partiality, but they both claim a slant towards the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalised. Ruether states, "Only the Church that stands on the side of the poor is the authentic Christian Church."[11] Both see poverty as an economic reality, yet they are aware of poverty as also being exclusion, a being "left out", or considered inferior. While Gutierrez deals more exclusively with poverty as it is found in Latin America, Ruether considers not only the marginalisation of women, but also the interstructuring of varied forms of oppression. Gutierrez' study of the theological understanding of poverty presents the ambiguities in traditional thinking about 'the poor': on one hand, the view of poverty as bad and scandalous, and on the other, as an openness to God. He suggests to us a third way: Christian poverty as solidarity with poor people and as a protest against the dehumanisation that want causes.[12] Ruether envisages a utopian society where exploitation is overcome in a co-operative, communitarian and ecologically balanced world; for her, competition, absolutisation, and the human drive to become infinite are what is behind the impoverishment of the many for the enrichment of the

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[10] Gutierrez, Op.cit., p. 146.

[11] Rosemary Ruether, "The Foundations of Liberation Languages: Christianity and Revolutionary Movements". Journal of Religious Thought, Spring-Summer, 1975, vol. 32/1, p. 83.

[12] Gutierrez, Op.cit., chapter thirteen: "Poverty, Solidarity, and Protest".

few.[13] While Gutierrez seeks to advance the poor, Ruether strives to eliminate the world view underpinning the division of the world and the victimisation of people. But both theologians are concerned about, and committed to, the oppressed and the marginalised. Both see their way of being with the poor not as a renunciation of the world but as an involvement in it. Ruether joins Gutierrez in affirming solidarity with the poor as necessary, yet she is sensitive to the dangers of an over simple division of humanity into neat categories of oppressed (who are "good") and oppressors (who are "bad"). Ruether stresses the need for a more intricate analysis of the complex inter-structure of human injustice and deprivation.[14]

2. Dualism and wholeness

Both Gutierrez and Ruether treat the problem of dualism, although for Gutierrez it is somewhat less pervasive. For Ruether, wholeness is the basic aim of liberation, while she sees dualism as the source of alienated thinking and acting. Gutierrez does not use the same terminology. Gutierrez speaks of the distinction of planes; he sees these as temporal-spiritual or profane-sacred polarities which arise from a natural-supernatural split. He traces this kind of dualism back to Cajetan (or perhaps even to Thomas Aquinas); Ruether sees the sources of dualism in the meshing of gnostic hellenistic dualism and Jewish

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[13] Ruether, New Woman, New Earth, pp. 209-211.

[14] Ruether, "Foundations of Liberation Languages", pp. 84-85.

apocalyptic dualism during the formative period of the Christian faith.[15] Gutierrez sees the effects of dualism primarily in the sharp distinction between the roles of clergy and laity, in the separation of church and world, in the apartheid of religion and politics.[16] Ruether has a broader perspective in talking about the results of dualistic belief; she sees the effects on personal and social relationships, especially those between women and men, as well as on the exploitation of the earth's resources.[17] Gutierrez, like Ruether, is influenced by Teilhard de Chardin; like her, he envisages salvation as uniting the fragmented and polarised. Perhaps it is because Gutierrez' concept of dualism is more restricted that he speaks of unity, of "convocation to salvation" of all people,[18] rather than using Ruether's more cosmic and sweeping term of wholeness.

Alfredo Fierro, in The Militant Gospel, takes Gutierrez to task for the importance which he attributes to the problem of the distinction of planes. Fierro contends that the old theology of dualism is no longer a live issue or option and that Gutierrez should be concerned with more contemporary questions and theologies.[19] Although Fierro might well have a point, in that Gutierrez is lacking in exposure to and under-

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[15]Gutierrez, Op.cit., p. 69.
Ruether, Liberation Theology, pp. 25-28.

[16]Gutierrez, Op.cit., pp. 63-68.

[17]Ruether, New Woman, New Earth, chapter eight.

[18]Gutierrez, Op.cit., pp. 69-71.

[19]Alfredo Fierro, The Militant Gospel. Trans. by John Drury. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1977. pp. 342-343.

standing of certain other theologies of today, Fierro does not seem to grasp the vastness and depth of the dualism problem: dualism is not just the fallacy of an outmoded theological school. Ruether makes the issue clearer in her tying dualism to the very roots of Christian thinking and in her analysis of the immense ethical implications; and Ruether cannot be faulted for a lack of dialogue with other current theologies and philosophies, thus making it evident that preoccupation with dualism is not a symptom of a theologically outmoded or provincial mind-set.[20] If anything, it is Ruether's study of contemporary theology and issues that sharpen her perception of the dimensions of the threat posed by dualism; like Gutierrez, she is well-read in Marx and Moltmann, but she is also expert on the ideas of Marcuse, the death of God theologians and secular theology, as well as the dynamics of racism and sexism, and the struggle for world peace (especially in Viet Nam).[21] Gutierrez may not exhibit the same depth or breadth as Ruether in his discussion of the dualism issue, but Ruether would confirm Gutierrez and urge him to take his argument even further. Contrary to Fierro's statements, Gutierrez' theology of unity and the convocation of humanity is not to be dismissed as out-dated or unimportant to the contemporary scene.[22]

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[20] See for example: Ruether, New Woman, New Earth, pp. 13-17. Also, Ruether, Liberation Theology, pp. 16-22.

[21] See Ruether's Radical Kingdom for specifics on the breadth of the sources for her theology.

[22] Indeed, one is struck by the lack of reference in Fierro's Militant Gospel to North American liberation theology. Fierro seems particularly unaware of feminist and black writing which in many ways supports Latin American theories.

3. Creation

Gutierrez joins Ruether in being interested in creation as the first act of saving history. He approaches creation in the same concrete, historical and existential way as Ruether does. Like her, he views creation as a continuing process of salvation and as the work of God in which humanity is called to participate. Likewise, Gutierrez also ties creation, covenant, exodus and redemption closely together, putting them all on the same continuum of God's activity with and for humankind in history. As in Ruether, the Exodus is of particular paradigmatic significance as the self-creation of a people through God's initiating and freeing act.[23]

If anything, Gutierrez seems to stress the Exodus experience somewhat more than Ruether, while Ruether tends to emphasise the "very good" nature of God's creation. Essentially, Gutierrez and Ruether have a common message; within this framework, Gutierrez leans toward political aspects of creation-history, while Ruether brings out an integrated Hebraic understanding of the whole goodness of world and humanity. For Ruether, "liberation begins in grace" and freedom is first of all a gift even before it must be redeemed from oppression and alienation.[24] Gutierrez, however, approaches creation through the Exodus experience.[25]

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[23]Gutierrez, Op.cit. pp. 153-160.
Ruether, Communion, pp. 10-12.

[24]Ruether, Liberation Theology, p. 9.

[25]Gutierrez, Op. cit., pp. 156-157.

Both Gutierrez and Ruether give us a very human-centred version of creation. Both stress the active role of human beings in God's on-going creational process. Gutierrez states, "Man is the crown and centre of the work of creation and is called to continue it through his labour.... By working, transforming the world, breaking out of servitude, building a just society and assuming his destiny in history, man forges himself."[26]

The Exodus motif illustrates the meaning of how humanity is stirred up to actualise its God-given freedom. Creation, according to Gutierrez, is only good where it is for humanity, as God intended it to be.[27] Gutierrez echoes the early Marx as well as St. Paul and Vatican II when he declares that beyond all struggle and striving "the goal is the creation of the new man."[28] Thus humanity not only creates with God, but is recreated by God in the liberation process. Ruether also affirms the same divine-human goal of creating a new humanity: it is to be marked by responsibility towards persons and the world. Ruether sees the new human as primarily one who learns how to be a creature, i.e., how to accept limitations, finitude, and cooperative existence with others.[29] Again, the basic concept of "new humanity" is essentially the same, although Gutierrez puts more emphasis on what this means politically while Ruether speaks in more philosophical and cosmic terms.

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[26]Gutierrez, pp. 158-159.

[27]Gutierrez, p. 159.

[28]Gutierrez, p. 146.

[29]Rosemary Ruether, "Rich Nations/Poor Nations and the Exploitation of the Earth." Dialog. Vol. 13, no. 3. Summer 1974. pp. 201-207.

4. Corporate Understanding of the Nature of Faith.

Both Ruether and Gutierrez understand faith as first of all a matter of a people, a community. They are both struggling against privatist ideas that have been so much a part of modern Western spirituality. Fierro notes this understanding of religion as public and critical as a common characteristic amongst the new political theologies (even although he appears to be ignorant of Ruether, his comments are relevant to her work at this point).[30] Gutierrez and Ruether both also see the opposite of faith, sin, as a social affair: "Sin is regarded as a social, historical fact, the absence of God and other men".[31] For sin, like faith, is not an abstraction but rather something encountered in particular and concrete situations where human beings and their relationship to each other and to God are affected.[32]

Again there is a difference in how Ruether and Gutierrez focus and express their common corporate understanding. Ruether talks more about community, i.e., about religious orders, family, utopian communities, and communitarian socialism. She appears to be more preoccupied with the creating of relational framework that supports and enables persons than is Gutierrez. He stresses a somewhat more active and ethical element, in putting more emphasis on the elimination of structures of

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[30]Fierro, Op.cit., p. 23.

See also: Johannes Metz, Theology of the World. New York: Herder and Herder, 1969, p. 110.

[31]Gutierrez, p. 175.

[32]Gutierrez, pp. 175-176.

injustice. For Gutierrez, love of neighbour means service more than it does relationship. Gutierrez is apt to use the language of confrontation and power, while Ruether gives us more cooperative images (such as "cultivate the garden").[33]

In both writers, there is a universalist and humanist understanding. While Ruether does not wish to draw definite boundary lines around the people of God, Gutierrez speaks of a "convocation to salvation" of all humanity. Both would see the establishment of justice as an activity of God's people whether or not these people called themselves Christians.[34]

Gutierrez uses more traditional language in speaking about the Church. But, like Ruether, he rejects an "ecclesiocentric perspective." Gutierrez follows Vatican II in describing the Church as a sacrament, i.e., as the fulfilment and revealing of God's saving will.[35] Ruether has a similar slant in her eschatological thinking about the church as the community of the new creation.[36] Both are agreed that world and church are not two opposing forces, but interpenetrating realities.[37]

The Eucharist is of special importance for both Ruether and Gutierrez. Ruether uses the imagery of the messianic banquet in Communion Is Life Together; Gutierrez writes of it as principally a mem-

[33]See, for example: Gutierrez, pp. 47-48

[34]Gutierrez, pp. 71-72.

[35]Gutierrez, pp. 258-259.

[36]Rosemary Ruether, "Who Was Jesus? What is the Church?" National Catholic Reporter. March 18, 1970.

[37]Gutierrez, p. 261.
Ruether, Church Against Itself, pp. 210-212.

orial of, and thanksgiving for, Christ's death and resurrection. Yet, both are in accord that this celebration is essentially communitarian and constitutes an imperative to carry out the justice and equality symbolised and made concrete here.[38] Both Ruether and Gutierrez link communion with the Exodus experience, and both feel that it is common commitment to justice and neighbourly love that is the basis for the communion of God's people at the Eucharist.[39]

5, Eschatological Approach

The eschatological element is strong in both Gutierrez and Ruether. Both are influenced by Moltmann, Bloch, and the theologies of hope. Both are also critical of Moltmann at certain points. Gutierrez finds him too abstract, while Ruether sees him as not presenting 'the last days' as something which could really happen.[40] Gutierrez and Ruether would also be in agreement with Metz's "creative and militant eschatology".[41] They see the promise of the future as something which is an impetus to the active participation of human beings in the present; their hope is no "pie in the sky". Gutierrez warns against a kind of future-orientation which merely takes the place of the former belief in the beyond.[42] Both Gutierrez and Ruether have a this-worldly, here-

[38] Gutierrez, pp. 262-263.

[39] Gutierrez, pp. 264-265.

[40] Gutierrez, pp. 215-218.
Ruether, Radical Kingdom, pp. 216-218.

[41] Metz, "An Eschatological View of the Church and the World", Theology of the World, p. 94f

[42] Gutierrez, p. 218.

and-now theology tied to God's promise and covenant with his/her people.

In relationship to hope, both Ruether and Gutierrez, therefore, see the necessity of struggle on the part of the people of God. As we have seen, in Ruether's analysis of struggle, transformation and synthesis are the key notes.[43] Like Ruether, Gutierrez also uses the utopian theme,[44] but he emphasises conflict and the necessity of taking sides in a polarised society.[45] Gutierrez' analysis is more Marxist in this respect, while Ruether stresses rather the need to go beyond the entire conflict-oriented, competitive, have/have-not system which necessitates dividing up humanity into two categories: oppressed and oppressors. While Gutierrez would use the imagery of struggle as confrontation, Ruether would see eschatological struggle as the pain of labour and growth. However, these are simply differences of emphasis.

Ruether's eschatology, in both The Radical Kingdom and Faith and Fratricide, is partly shaped by her studies of the messianic dynamic throughout Western history. She is more ambivalent about this dynamic, more complex in her analysis of the world, and probably more profound in her understanding of the merits and the dangers of apocalypticism active in history. Gutierrez does not get involved in a study of messianism and is also less concerned with tracing the historical impact of ideas. Rather his inspiration is derived from biblical material (especially Old Testament), the Latin American reality, and Marxist interpretation (which has its own apocalyptic thrust). Here, too, one

[43] See Chapter 2, Section B 5.

[44] Gutierrez, pp. 232-238.

[45] Gutierrez, p. 48.

finds a difference, this time in the scope of the kinds of material considered. Ruether has had a broader scholarly background, with a wider range of interests, sources, and publications.

6. Salvation and Freedom

"The theology of liberation is a theology of salvation in the concrete historical and political circumstances of today".[46] Gutierrez talks about salvation overtly, using the word and linking the concept with the liberation process. Much more than Ruether, he deals with this traditional theological idea openly, placing it at the heart of theology.[47] More covertly, but with the same meaning, Ruether claims that freedom is salvation.[48]

Gutierrez explains that the concept of salvation has changed and must continue to change from a quantitative understanding to a qualitative one. No longer can the number of the saved, a moralistic perspective, and a world-fleeing spirituality be the characteristics of our notion of salvation. Salvation, according to Gutierrez, belongs to this world; it is the communion of God with humanity, and of persons with each other. It is fulfilment of "every aspect of humanity: body and spirit, individual and society, person and cosmos, time and etern-

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[46] Gutierrez, "The Hope of Liberation". Mission Trends No. 3. (eds.) Gerald Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky, New York: Paulist Press, 1976, p. 68.

[47] Gutierrez, Liberation Theology, chapter 9, "Liberation and Salvation." See also: Gutierrez, "Freedom & Salvation" in Gutierrez & Shaull, Liberation & Change, Atlanta: John Knox, 1977, pp. 3f.

[48] See Chapter 2, Section B 5.

ity".[49] This is virtually the same thing as Ruether means by wholeness, mutuality and community.

Christ is more explicitly the pinnacle of what salvation means for Gutierrez than He is for Ruether. Although, like Ruether, Gutierrez sees creation as a part of the saving process and salvation as a reality within history,[50] he sees radical liberation as the gift and work of Christ.[51] Gutierrez uses traditional terms to speak of the Christ, for example, "the image of the Father", and "the perfect God-Man",[52] but he is not completely convincing about exactly how it is that humanity is freed by this act of God. He assumes that all people are liberated from sin (in the corporate sense) through Christ, but does not completely explain Who Christ is or how this freeing action occurred and/or is still occurring. Gutierrez states, "In Christ the all-comprehensiveness of the liberating process reaches its fullest sense".[53] Ruether might well agree, but she would want to examine more completely what exactly this means, unhampered by the terminology and thought-forms of traditional orthodoxy.

7. A New Way of Doing Theology

Letty Russell speaks of the common methodology that liberation

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[49]Gutierrez, Liberation Theology, pp. 151-152.

[50]Gutierrez, Op.cit., pp. 152-154.

[51]Gutierrez, Op.cit., p. 176.

[52]Gutierrez, Op.cit., p. 152.

[53]Gutierrez, Op.cit., p. 178

theologies share. Although Ruether and Gutierrez are different in many ways, they agree on certain basic ways of doing theology; they are both liberation theologians. Russell states that liberation theologies are genitive theologies, i.e., they are theologies of, about, and usually by specific groups who have felt oppressed or marginalised in some way.[54] Gutierrez, therefore, presents a theology of the Latin American reality, while Ruether writes often about the situation of women. Neither is solely relevant within their special group, nor are they unaware of their particular and peculiar contexts. Both Gutierrez and Ruether stress the fact that they, as liberation theologians, are reflecting on historical processes and action--they are interested in bringing theology to bear on the problem of human oppression and liberation. Gutierrez uses the word praxis more often than Ruether to describe this reflection on practice, but both are doing essentially the same thing.[55]

Due to their common theological reflection on historical praxis, both Gutierrez and Ruether emphasize the need of theology to draw on the resources of other disciplines. They stress the need to be in dialogue not only with political realities, but with all human sciences and philosophy. They see theology as in need of "generalists" who can integrate, ask questions of, and seek ultimate understanding through

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[54] Letty Russell, Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974, pp. 52-56.

[55] Ruether, Liberation Theology, p. 1.
Gustavo Gutierrez in Frontiers of Theology in Latin America, Rosino Gibellini (ed.) Trans. by John Drury. Maryknoll, New York: 1979. pp. 22-25.

the academic specialties dealing with human life. Obviously, a team-work approach is necessary in an endeavour of this scope: therefore, liberation theologians are called to communal dialogue, criticism, and support. This interdisciplinary and corporate approach marks theologians of liberation because the breadth, depth, and width of the quest for human freedom encompass all that it means to be human.[56]

Yet, Gutierrez and Ruether, as well as liberation theologians in general, do not see their work as that of justifying certain stances or positions already taken. They are not really defensive, but basically pastoral in a social and political as well as in a personal way. Theirs is "advocacy scholarship" (to use Ruether's words), bound up with the support of human beings in particular situations. Their focus is fundamentally people rather than ideology or systematic doctrine.[57] Probably it is this type of pastoral and personal concern that is at the root of authentic theologies of all kinds: Gutierrez notes in passing, "Theological questions give rise to new theological books; pastoral questions give rise to new theologies."[58]

But Gutierrez stresses repeatedly that real liberation theology can only be done by the oppressed themselves: "... we will not have an authentic theology of liberation until the oppressed are able to

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[56]Ruether, Liberation Theology, pp. 2-5.
Gutierrez in Frontiers of Theology, p. 23

[57]Gutierrez in Frontiers of Theology, p. 22.
Ruether, New Woman, New Earth, p. xii.

[58]Gutierrez in Theology in the Americas, Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (eds.), p. 312. Also: a discussion of Latin American liberation theology with specific reference to Gutierrez in Disputed Questions: On Being A Christian. Nashville: Abingdon, 1982, pp. 99-107.

express themselves freely and creatively in society and as the People of God."[59] And, as he goes on to note, this has only just begun to happen.[60]

C. Areas of Divergence between Gustavo Gutierrez and Rosemary Ruether

Often areas of difference between Ruether and Gutierrez, between feminist and Latin American theologies of liberation, are explicit in Ruether's comments on the shortcomings of various liberation theologies.[61] It is unfortunate that Gutierrez does not make similar written remarks about theologies of liberation other than his own. Therefore, it is hard to assess the opinions that he might have concerning Ruether and feminism: perhaps this silence means that he is not interested, perhaps it means that he is too busy with his own particular field of interest. It is my opinion that Ruether and Gutierrez have much to say to each other, much which could be helpful to each other. Therefore, I can only regret the lack of Latin American comment on Ruether's feminist

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[59] Gutierrez, Liberation and Change. Atlanta: John Knox, 1977. Part One, chapter three, "Freedom and Liberation", p. 87.

[60] Gutierrez, Ibid., p. 88.

[61] See especially Ruether's comments in:
Liberation Theology, pp. 10-16.
"Outlines for a Theology of Liberation", Dialog, Vol.11 Autumn, 1972. pp. 252-257.
"The Foundations of Liberation Languages", Journal of Religious Thought, Vol. 32/1. Spring-Summer, 1975. pp. 74-85.
"Rich Nations/Poor Nations and the Exploitation of the Earth", Dialog, Vol. 13/3. Summer, 1974. pp. 201-207.
"Letter of Rosemary Ruether to Sergio Torres", Theology in the Americas, Torres and Eagleson (eds.) Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976. p. 84.

viewpoint.[62]

However, Ruether is not merely critical of Latin American theology. She is primarily enthusiastic about it and its possibilities.[63] She is also involved in it, as her presence as a participant in the Women for Dialogue group in Puebla, Mexico, in February, 1979, at the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM III), will testify.[64] She has been appreciative and supportive of Latin American theologians and has continued to learn and teach about the Latin American reality.[65] It is within an attitude of basic agreement, that divergence is to be found. Many of these differences can be traced to the different situations and education of the two theologians; for liberation theology the considerations of the particular context are crucial.

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[62]Robert McAfee Brown reports that Gutierrez was conscientized by his women students on the woman question during his two semesters as visiting professor at Union Theological Seminary, New York, during 1976-77. Gutierrez admitted, upon being questioned, that he saw no reason to withhold ordination from women, although it was for him a new idea. See Brown, Gustavo Gutierrez. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980. pp. 11 and 27.

[63]See for example: Ruether, Liberation Theology, Chapter 12, "Latin American Theology of Liberation and the Birth of a Planetary Humanity". Also: "Christology and Latin American Liberation Theology", To Change The World. London: SCM, 1981, chapter II.

[64]Ruether (and several co-participants) reported on this involvement at the consultation on "The Church in the Americas: The North American Response to CELAM III", Garrett-Evangelical Seminary, February 20-22, 1979.

See also: Ruether. "Consciousness-Raising at Puebla: Women Speak to the Latin Church", Christianity & Crisis, April 2, 1979, p.77f.

[65]In a personal letter, dated December 1977, Ruether notes a summer visit to the study centre at Cuernavaca, Mexico, and the efforts of her whole family to develop Spanish language abilities.

1. The Sufficiency/Insufficiency of Marxist Analysis

As we have seen both Ruether and Gutierrez believe in the priority of the poor. Both would claim that the Christian must take sides with the left-out and exploited people of the world. Yet, Ruether feels that it is over simple to divide humanity into two opposing camps, the oppressed and the oppressors. The "poor" are not always easily identified with the clean-cut precision that would make this a useful and just analysis. Ruether sees polarization as not only simplistic, but destructive. Merely reversing the roles of the oppressor and the oppressed is really no liberation. Rather than simply changing who is dominant, a new mode of cooperative being is required.[66]

The Latin American reality is one which lends itself easily to the polarised analysis of oppressed/oppressor terminology. While Marxist analysis is useful in such a context, in other situations it cannot adequately deal with the complexity of reality. Gutierrez is thoroughly immersed in the particularity of his situation, and therefore it is not surprising that he adopts the ideology of his world. Yet, while ideology is necessary in every situation for the proclaiming and living out of the faith, it is not the ultimate truth; it is not the faith itself. Ideology is to be used in the service of the faith; but a servant is not without influence on, and can be a danger to, its master.[67] Ruether's

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[66]Ruether, "Foundations of Liberation Language", pp. 84-85.

[67]That Latin American theologians are well aware of this ideology/faith dilemma is well seen in the treatment of this issue by Juan Luis Segundo in The Liberation of Theology. Trans. John Drury. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1976. See especially chapter four.

environment in North America has been a more complicated one; she has been thrust into close contact, not only with her own situation as a woman, but also with the struggles of blacks and Jews. In addition, being a sensitive person in a most powerful nation has given Ruether an opportunity to be aware of the victimisation of dependent cultures.[68]

Therefore, Ruether points out the need for liberation theologies to consider more fully the complexity, the multiple oppressions, and the inter-structuring of systems of domination. She urges more comprehensiveness, a more global view. She also desires to give understanding of a broader spectrum of human groups who are similarly in need of freedom.[69] And yet this total understanding is not to be at the expense of particularism, but really through it:

> "We can then, perhaps,begin to chart a movement of the whole globe toward a new unity...but only through each cultural area and each people striving to realise this revolutionary possibility in the context of its own identity and integrity as a historical people. Development toward a new planetary humanity goes hand in hand with the revolt of every oppressed group, in demands for national, class, racial, and sexual integrity and identity. Men can move closer together only on the basis of each group's self-realisation."[70]

Ruether does not see various oppressions as unrelated phenomena, but as connected by the causative "chauvinist, paranoid psychology (which)

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[68]Ruether, "Foundations of Liberation Languages", pp. 84-85.

[69]See also Jurgen Moltmann, who criticises Latin American theology's use of Marxism without formulating a uniquely Latin American form of socialism. Socialism, he says, must be truly of the people. See "An Open Letter to José Miguez Bonino", Christianity and Crisis, vol. 36/5, March 29, 1976, pp. 57-63.

[70]Ruether, Liberation Theology, p. 189.

has directed men's productive energies into destruction rather than the alleviation of the necessities of all."[71] Thus it is not surprising that Ruether often writes in a way that interrelates the various corners of the liberation movement.[72] This interest in and study of the interrelation of various kinds of oppression is absent from the thought of Gutierrez.

It is probably because Latin American liberation theology uses a Marxist analysis based on social/economic class that other forms of oppression have been difficult for Latin American theologians to deal with. This comes out in their silence concerning racism and sexism.[73] It also comes out in vocal bewilderment and lack of perception such as was seen at the consultation on Evangelization and Politics at Matanzas, Cuba, when the report on racism and sexism was discussed.[74] While class analysis is helpful, it has limitations when one is dealing with complex global reality. It is to be hoped that Latin American theology is still capable of modification towards more adequate consideration of the areas of sex and race.

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[71] Ruether, Ibid., p. 118

[72] See, for example, part two of New Woman, New Earth, pp. 87-131, where Ruether treats the interrelation of sexism and anti-semitism as well as sexism and racism.

[73] For example, of the Latin American theologians contributing to Theology in the Americas, only a woman, Beatriz Melano Couch, refers even briefly to racism and sexism.

[74] Personal report of North American participant, Gordon Stewart. Consultation sponsored by Evangelical Theological School, Matanzas, Cuba, and Christian Peace Conference in Latin America and the Caribbean, and held February 25-March 2, 1979.

We have already noted that Gutierrez regards conflict and confrontation as necessary to liberating struggle.[75] This terminology is linked with his use of Marxist analysis. Although Ruether is still a believer in revolutionary change, she employs a more evolutionary language, blending the imagery of Teilhard de Chardin and Marcuse into her analysis of reality. Ruether can speak of transformation and synthesis, of the matrix of being, of cooperation, while these thought forms would seem alien to Gutierrez. Ruether does not entirely disregard or dispute Marxist thinking, based on a conflict pattern, but she notes well its limits.[76]

2. The Insufficiency of Apocalyptic Alone

Ruether's understanding of the apocalyptic-prophetic tradition is the context for her most far-reaching comments on Latin American theology. Ruether sees the apocalyptic sectarian tradition as providing the model for the Christian Marxist Latin American theologies, as well as for Cone's black theology. The apocalyptic viewpoint is a polarised one, dividing humanity into the children of darkness and light; it loses the more shaded and moderated view of prophecy.[77] Ruether admits that the circumstances of our world (and especially Latin America) today are such that apocalyptic language is largely justified and necessary.[78]

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[75] See Section B, 5 of this chapter.
Also, Gutierrez, Liberation Theology, p. 48.

[76] Ruether, "Outlines for a Theology of Liberation", p. 253.

[77] Ruether, "Foundations of Liberation Language", p. 75.

[78] Ruether, Liberation Theology, pp. 175-176.

She sees the apocalyptic perspective operating throughout history as a protest against an absolutised and closed status quo, as a promise that change is possible.[79] Ruether is well aware of the great possibilities for good of apocalyptic and messianic perspectives (of which Marxism is one); these can help considerably in the process of judgment and liberation. But there are grave dangers with apocalyptic thinking which must be faced.[80]

The danger of the dualistic, polarised thought patterns of apocalypticism is that the victims are identified as the "righteous remnant" while the oppressors are seen as the "beast". While this can activate and give needed hope to the victims, it also tends to make necessary self-criticism difficult. Without self-criticism, a revolutionary movement solidifies into a new absolutist and repressive establishment. Also, the alienated victims of the apocalyptic mould see themselves as outside the community which they are criticising and against which they are protesting. Thus they lose the essential prophetic dynamic of self-judgment as a part of the people criticised. Unable to see the ambiguities of the situations of both the powerful and the powerless, apocalyptic victims refuse the help they need to overcome their own defects and also refuse to participate in the necessary transformation of their captors. A polarised model also makes it difficult for sympathetic members of the dominant group to remain responsibly within their group working for change from within the centre of power. The paranoid nature

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[79]Ruether, "Foundations of Liberation Language", pp. 76-80.

[80]Ruether, Liberation Theology, p. 11.

of apocalyptic thinking tends to produce either destructive violence or unproductive flight from reality.[81] The apocalyptic messianic dynamic, when it cannot sustain prophetic self-criticism within it, turns into a self-righteous and enslaving ideology. Ruether notes that apocalyptic messianism of a self-absolutising type has been common not only with socialist projects, but also with the endeavours of liberal democracy.[82]

Ruether accepts the vision and protest of the apocalyptic/ radical approach. She sees that,combined with prophetic pragmatism and continuing capacity for self-criticism, it can be part of a very creative force. This synthesis can bring about historical transformation in the light of transcendent aspirations.[83] Ruether has rejected attempts merely to label North Americans as 'the bad guys' in apocalyptic style rather than to provide resources for prophetic self-criticism and change. She would listen to Latin American liberation voices, but she would also feel the need to respond, to dialogue, to work together for change from within the North American context.[84] Ruether states her evaluation of liberation theology:

> "All theologies of liberation...will be abortive ...unless they finally go beyond the apocalyptic sectarian polarization of the "oppressed" and the "oppressors". The victims rise to liberation by finding a stance where they can become both self-

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[81] Ruether, Liberation Theology, pp. 10-14.

[82] Ruether, "Foundations of Liberation Languages", pp. 78-79.

[83] Ruether, Liberation Theology, pp. 167-172.

[84] See "Letter of Rosemary Ruether to Sergio Torres and Planners of Conference", Theology in the Americas, pp. 84-86.

> critical and can address the enemy as, potentially, a brother. Those who judge their own people as the enemy, by the same token, must do so in a way that defines this as an apostasy from its own authentic promise." 85

One can only imagine how Gutierrez would respond to Ruether at this point.

In order to evaluate Ruether's comments on the apocalyptic nature of Latin American theology, we must ask about her understanding of what apocalyptic is. We need to ask whether Ruether might not be trying to put Latin American theology into the pre-existent mould of her own understanding of apocalyptic. Her interest in apocalyptic and messianism is obvious in The Radical Kingdom; it also seems to be a frequent theme currently in theological discussions. But the nature and origins of apocalyptic are by no means agreed upon.

Ruether seems to assume the position of D. S. Russell: apocalyptic is an extension of prophecy, an attempt to deal prophetically with the changed situation of the apocalyptists' own more desolate times. Apocalyptic, like prophecy, is a proclamation of hope as well as protest vis-a-vis the existing structures of reality.[86] Ruether, like Russell, has a cautiously positive view of apocalyptic with its themes of ultimate transcendence, universality, and final transformation of the world; both Ruether and Russell see the apocalyptic vision in many ways as a superseding of the previous prophetic view with its political, nationalistic, and military concerns.[87] Ruether herself

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[85] Ruether, "Outlines for a Theology of Liberation", p. 255.

[86] D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964. p. 92.

[87] Ibid., p. 265.

constantly uses the theme of creation and re-creation just as apocalyptic writers did. Thus, in pointing out the apocalyptic elements in Latin American theology, she is not meaning this to be an utterly negative thing.[88] Russell stresses the importance of Messianism in apocalyptic thinking, making it a key element. Ruether is at home with this when she seems virtually to identify apocalypticism and Messianism.[89] While Messianism is also a feature of prophetic writing, apocalyptic development is somewhat different in approach. Apocalyptic focuses on the coming Kingdom more than on the person of the Messiah; apocalyptic Messianism is transcendent, global, and supernatural in character, while prophetic thinking is more in terms of the concrete national here-and-now present.[90] It is true that both Ruether and Latin American theology have a utopian streak that looks similar to the apocalyptic vision; but both are also tied to specific present realities in a way that recalls prophetism. The themes of struggle, of redemption, of resurrection and of judgment are characteristic of both apocalyptic and of the liberation theologies; but prophetism also makes much of these ideas. The cosmic vision of 'the last days' is common to Ruether, Latin American theology and apocalyptic, but Ruether is critical of the dualistic think-

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[88] Ibid., p. 280.

[89] John C. Meagher complains that Ruether uses "apocalyptic' and 'messianic' interchangeably, when they should not be so used. See "As the Twig Was Bent: Anti-Semitism in Greco-Roman and Earliest Christian Times", Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity. (ed.) Alan T. Davies, New York: Paulist Press, 1979. p. 15.

[90] Russell, Op.cit., p. 308.

ing of apocalypticism.

Gerhard von Rad gives us a description of apocalyptic that differs in some ways from Russell's and, by implication, from Ruether's. Von Rad's stricter definition makes apocalyptic primarily a literary phenomenon (not a theological development) of late Judaism, a group of pseudepigraphical writings from Daniel to IV Ezra.[91] Von Rad is less positive in his evaluation of apocalyptic, seeing its main characteristic as eschatological dualism, and also seeing it as esoteric in nature. In fact, von Rad does not understand apocalyptic as having its main roots in prophetism at all, but rather as finding its principal source in wisdom literature. Von Rad underlines the completely different views of history held respectively by apocalypticism and prophetism, stating that the centre of apocalypticism is knowledge of the universal God rather than the acts of God in history.[92] Like Ruether, von Rad is fearful of the gnostic-like dualism that he sees in apocalypticism. But since, unlike Russell, he does not see apocalypticism as closely related to prophetism, probably he would also reject as impossible Ruether's concept of the ideal synthesis of prophecy and apocalyptic.

If von Rad, rather than Russell, were to be considered authoritative, then Ruether would have to be considered in a more critical light. Her seeing apocalypticism in liberation theologies (and indeed in the radical current of thought through the ages) would have to be rejected as

[91] Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Volume II: "The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions". Trans. D.M.G.Stalker. New York: Harper and Row, 1965, p. 301.

[92] Ibid., pp. 302-308.

out of keeping with von Rad's stricter and more pessimistic definitions. But, as it is, there is a difference of opinion amongst leading scholars about the nature and origins of apocalyptic.[93] Probably Ruether could be criticised for not pointing out these various points of view. Perhaps she needs to explain the sources of her own ideas concerning apocalyptic more carefully, leaving nothing to assumptions.

Since dualism is the main pit-fall of apocalypticism (according to both Russell and von Rad), in so far as radical theologians are apocalyptic in outlook, they must be aware of the dangers of dualism. Ruether is correct in pointing out the possibility of grave error. But as both prophetism and apocalypticism were responses to the demands of their times and situations, so liberation theologies are born out of their contexts. While it is helpful to see the apocalyptic and prophetic veins of thought as sources of liberation theologies, these new theologies cannot be completely identified or equated with the responses of the past. One must ask whether liberation theologies are truly liberating and whether they are holistic in their hope for the humanity which they address. The past can give one possible key to understanding the present, but it cannot be a master key which can unlock all the rooms of the present's meaning.

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[93] For a good survey of opinions on the nature of apocalyptic, see: P. Vielhauer in Hennecke-Schneemelcher, New Testament Apocrypha (Trans. R. MacL. Wilson) London: SCM, 1965, volume 2. pp. 581-642.

3. Orthodoxy

Less obvious, but nevertheless extremely significant, is the divergence between Ruether and Gutierrez in their ability fundamentally to question orthodoxy. Ruether, as we have seen, has asked the most basic questions about the meaning of Jesus as the Christ. She has been acutely critical of how "popular orthodoxy" has been translated into social intolerance and religious closedness.[94] One would find it hard to decide on whether Ruether would meet the traditional definitions of orthodoxy. But she does not seem concerned with 'fitting in' to a doctrinal system, but rather with searching out truth amidst social reality. She does not give us definite answers about Christology, for example, but she continues to ask fundamental questions. She is not a 'systematic' or a 'dogmatic' theologian.

Gutierrez, on the other hand, seems to assume most traditional dogmatic thinking without too much question. While he is radical on a social and political level, he is either silent or conservative on doctrinal issues. Fierro has noted this phenomenon in Gutierrez (as well as in Latin American theology as a whole), calling it "a theology of subversive orthodoxy", "social progressivism with theological conservatism", and "leftist orthodoxy".[95] Often Gutierrez seems to be writing a kind of applied theology or a new social ethics based on traditional thinking. Probably his context is one in which radical thinking on ethical and social questions is necessitated by the Latin

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[94] See Chapter I, Section B 8; Also Chapter II, Section A 4.

[95] Fierro, Op.cit., p. 344.

American reality of poverty, but which also by its Constantinian character has inhibited questioning of basic dogma which would be more likely to occur in a more secularised environment. Gutierrez, as a priest, has less freedom vis-a-vis traditional doctrine than Ruether, both because of his work situation within the ecclesiastical system and because of his training.

Fierro suggests that what is needed is a renunciation of the whole positive and dogmatic approach: he suggests a theology which is negative (i.e., critical, reflective) and symbolic to prohibit the closing in of the world on itself. He feels that theology must stop its twenty centuries old tradition of looking on itself as a form of higher knowledge.[96] Both Gutierrez and Ruether do this to a large extent through their identifying the whole "humanum" as the locus of theology. Since, for them, it is people and history that are crucial, they are both critical and non-dogmatic in style. But Ruether rejects to a larger extent the customary Christian language and formulae; she also has allowed her encounter with reality (for example, with the problem of anti-semitism and with the historical-critical study of the origin of Christianity) to challenge even the underlying assumptions of orthodoxy.

In addition, Ruether is well aware that theology is always in need of being re-thought and re-expressed. She adopts Vahanian's emphasis on the temporariness (although the necessity) of human statements about God. She seems, therefore, ready to be self-critical and capable of

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[96] Ibid., p. 361.

change.

It seems ironical that, at the very points at which Fierro criticises Gutierrez and Latin American theology, Ruether comes out strong by his criteria--and yet, Fierro does not recognise Ruether's existence.[97] Feminist theology has been more radical in questioning the validity of the whole Judaeo-Christian tradition as meaningful for women. While feminist thinkers have often been dismissed as "far-out" or "off the track", one must concede that they have been more willing than most other liberation theologians to let their analysis of reality question the basic concepts of faith. While this endeavour has many dangers, responsibly handled it might indeed be a part of what theology must become in the post-Christendom era. Neither radical feminists nor Fierro would call Gutierrez "wrong" but they would suggest that he go further in his analysis of what reality means; orthopraxis will inevitably pose questions of orthodoxy.[98]

4. The Clergy

Although Ruether and Gutierrez have much in common in the area of ecclesiology, they write from different situations (as a lay woman and a priest respectively) and with a different focus (Ruether is less institutionally oriented than Gutierrez). It is understandable, there-

[97] Ibid., pp. 357-362.

[98] Jon Sobrino's Christology at the Crossroads. (Trans. by John Drury. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1978) is a recent attempt to make Christology more meaningful in the Latin American context. However, he does not seem to share Ruether's shatteringly critical attitude towards traditional dogmatics.

fore, that there would be implicit differences in their feeling about the clergy.

Neither Gutierrez nor Ruether is very happy about the traditional model of the cleric or the religious in a rapidly changing world. Gutierrez sees the need for a profound change in the life-style of the priest in the light of the Latin American reality. This he mainly sees in terms of having a working clergy who do not entirely depend on the financial resources of the institutional church. He also urges more decision-making power for priests, religious and lay people in the pastoral matters of the church.[99] In this, Ruether would certainly agree, but she would go further.

Ruether raises questions concerning the clergy that Gutierrez does not. She doubts the value of compulsory celibacy for priests. She feels that pastoral service might normally (although not always) be best done by men and women who are also involved in the everyday nurturing tasks of family-building.[100] It might be that Gutierrez would be sympathetic to this viewpoint, but he does not raise the possibility of married priests.

More radically, Ruether doubts the whole hierarchical nature of the institutional church. As we have seen, she opposes the present clergy/laity split in the institutional church and affirms the priesthood and service of all believers.[101] Gutierrez never spells out what he means

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[99]Gutierrez, Op.cit., p. 118.

[100]Ruether, Liberation Theology, pp. 62-64.

[101]See Chapter II, Section A 3.

by the "growing radicalization" that he sees as the new approach towards problems of ministry.[102] It is possible that he, like Ruether, might have hesitations about the clerical domination of the church. But he does not give us any indications of the development of his thought in this direction.

Ironically, it is the laywoman, Ruether, rather than the priest, Gutierrez, who supplies us with glimpses of practical pastoral know-how at the parish level. Ruether's humanity as well as her theological perception often come across most clearly in these moments of concern with a particular worshipping, learning, and serving community of faith.[103] One could wish for similar examples of liberation theology-in-action from Gutierrez. Certainly his background, rich in experience with the poor, could provide many interesting illustrations.[104]

5. Ecology

Not surprisingly, Ruether points out that Latin American theology has not yet dealt with the ecological crisis. This criticism comes nearly in the same breath as Ruether's appreciation of Latin American theologians' rejection of the development concept for that of liberation.

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[102] Gutierrez, Op.cit., p. 119.

[103] Ruether's Communion Is Life Together is educational material written especially for the children of St. Stephen's in Washington,D.C.
See also, for example: "The Visual Arts for the Church of the Present". The Living Light, vol. 4, no. 2, Summer 1967.
"Basic Eucharist for Small Groups" Continuum, vol. 5, no. 3. Fall, 1967.
"St. Stephen's Educational Program" Living Light, vol.5,no. 1, Spring, 1968.

[104] Winter, pp. 30-38

She appreciates the spiritual overtones of the Latin American search for real independence, identity, and community. She realises that Latin Americans are searching for a pattern of society which is different from the competitive, consumption-oriented West. All of this could lead on into a Latin American realisation of the need to re-understand humanity's exploitation of the earth and natural resources, but so far it has not. Ruether claims that the reason for this lack of insight is that Latin Americans still incorporate in their thinking the developmentalist myth of progress and the infinite capacity of earth's resources.[105]

Probably, Gutierrez, along with many others from the poor nations, would label ecology as a pre-occupation of the rich and leisured nations who do not have to worry about the more primary concern of having enough to eat. Modernisation is seen as the escape from poverty, because industrialisation has led to the wealth of the developed world. Although Latin Americans do not want the same kind of modernisation as the West, they still have an internalised mentality of competitive and limitless progress.

Gutierrez is concerned with a liberation from need through a liberation from dependence. Ruether is stressing the need for a liberation from a mentality which produces both dependence and impoverishment of global resources; these together create poverty and ultimate disaster for the rich as well as the poor. Ruether admits that it is the rich

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[105]Ruether, "Rich Nations/Poor Nations and the Exploitation of the Earth" Dialog, vol. 13, no. 3. Summer 1974. pp. 203-204.

who are guilty of pollution and over-consumption.[106] Therefore, it seems appropriate that it is to the rich nations that the ecological message should be addressed.

But Ruether is not concerned purely with the ecological crisis. She is concerned with its ultimate causes, and therefore sees solutions as effective in so far as they deal with these causes. She sees the roots of the nineteenth century idea of progress in the ancient dualism which split apart body and spirit. The earth, like women and other dependent peoples, is to be exploited and used since it is identified with the inferior or 'bad' body principle of the dualism.[107] Therefore, the ultimate solution to the ecology problem (as well as to the problems of global poverty and injustice) is, according to Ruether, conditional on bringing into being a new world-view which is holistic and co-operative.[108] Ruether would see Gutierrez' lack of perception on the ecology question, alongside his silence on racism and sexism, as a symptom of a polarised analysis of reality. He fails, she would say, here too, because he does not consider the interrelation of oppressions. For real solutions, a new holistic vision and practice must be found. On this problem of ecological crisis, Ruether again points out the danger of a narrowly Marxist viewpoint which prohibits a truly

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[106] Ibid., p. 204

[107] Ruether, "Women, Ecology, and the Domination of Nature". The Ecumenist. vol. 14, no. 1. November-December, 1975. pp. 1-4.

[108] Ruether, New Woman, New Earth. pp. 204-210.
See also: "The Biblical Vision of the Ecological Crisis". Christian Century, March 7, 1979.

global and comprehensive analysis and solution.[109]

Ruether is not an advocate, therefore, of Western capitalism. Rather she suggests a democratic socialism of a communitarian type, which encourages the de-centralization of the economy and the real individualization of persons, as the system of political organisation which could achieve a socially and ecologically sound world.[110] In addition, she says that some type of global management of resources is necessary for human survival. While this should not be totalitarian, it is equally not a part of Western democracy as we know it.[111]

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[109] Ruether, "Rich Nations/Poor Nations"

[110] Ruether, New Woman, New Earth, pp. 206-210.

[111] Ibid., p. 206.
Also: Ruether, "Rich Nations/Poor Nations" p. 205.

CHAPTER FOUR

FREEDOM: SELF-ACTUALISATION AND ROSEMARY RUETHER

A. The Contemporary Context in North America

To understand Rosemary Ruether's theology and her perspective on what freedom is, it is necessary to look also at the climate of thought and the world view of the time in which she writes and the people to whom she is speaking. Ruether's theology is done in the North American context of the sixties and seventies; her feminist and liberation thinking comes into focus especially in the seventies.

In North American theology, and indeed in the popular world-view, the influence of psychology and the social sciences is increasingly strong. The points of reference for contemporary Americans are not those of classical understanding, but rather those of the human sciences. Although Ruether's education was peculiarly classical, by American standards, she is writing within the contemporary American context for people whose situation is informed by the psychologists and sociologists far more than by classical philosophers.

While Freud is recognised as the father of the science of psychology, his ideas are not now the common coin of understanding. North Americans such as Eric Erikson and Abraham Maslow have been more influential on the popular search for meaning. During the past decades, the human potential movement has been particularly strong. Self-actualisation (or self-fulfilment) has become the popular vision of the highest good. This has been especially true in the seventies, as

people have turned inward to the development of their own personal resources due to disillusionment with the results of social change in the sixties. Because people felt socially powerless, the attention of the culture turned to the challenge of the human personality. Goals, longings and dreams were increasingly expressed in personal rather than in political terms. Self-actualisation (or S. A., as it is often called in the States) is particularly connected with the psychologist Abraham Maslow (1908-1970). Maslow was the developer of a new way of psychological understanding that became popular because it met the needs of society. While this world-view, centred on self-fulfilment, was something far vaster and vaguer than Maslow's psychology, something more "in the wind" than on paper, yet in order to grasp more adequately the contemporary North American understanding of freedom it would be well to look at Ruether alongside this exceedingly articulate spokesman of contemporary psychology in the North American context.

B. Abraham Maslow as Prophet of Self-Actualisation

Although Abraham Maslow was not a theologian, his humanistic orientation to psychology means that his work approaches the domains of faith and philosophy. He voices the "new humanism" which lies behind the contemporary Western impulse towards self-fulfilment and personal growth. Maslow used the language of the psychology of persons to weave a fabric of meaning and hope amidst a torn and frightened world. He was preoccupied not only with describing human persons, but even

more with improving them.

Like Ruether, Maslow does not really discuss freedom as such. Unlike her, he does not speak about liberation either. Maslow talks about self-actualisation and transcendent experience as the ultimate, the far goals of human life. These far goals seem similar to Ruether's; Maslow describes the resolution of dichotomies, the wholeness and the integration of self-actualisation. Maslow does not talk about the spirit, but he recognises spontaneity, simplicity, naturalness to be characteristics of self-actualising people.[1] Maslow is interested in personal freedom or actualisation and he is interested in the free good society. Maslow was not deeply involved in political and international analysis. Yet, Maslow's theory has great implications for freedom far beyond the field of psychology. His theory might be seen as the underpinning of a new holistic, humanist, and transcendent view of people. This would be immensely relevant to the sphere of political thinking. Freedom for Maslow begins with personal growth and the realisation of the possible within the human personality.

As the son of poor and uneducated Jewish Russian immigrants to New York, Maslow had the drive and persistence of those determined to overcome marginal circumstances. He identified with those who suffer through having had a real struggle himself.[2] Maslow was strongly influenced by

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[1]Maslow, Abraham H., Motivation and Personality (second edition). New York: Harper and Row, 1954. pp. 178-180.

[2]Maddi, Salvatore R. and Paul T. Costa, Humanism in Personality: Allport, Maslow, and Murray. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, Inc., 1972. pp. 116-117.

such experiences as his marriage and parenthood, his teachers (among them, Ruth Bennett, Karen Horney, Max Werthermer, and Erich Fromm), his work with the Blackfoot Indians, and the outbreak of World War II. His early interest in behaviourism and research on monkeys turned abruptly towards developing a new "third force" humanistic psychology that would become the basis for true peace and prove humanity to be capable of more than hatred, prejudice, and war.[3] Maslow's warm and passionate nature, as well as his early experience of suffering and need, made him a crusader willing to struggle to the end for his vision of the possibilities of humanity. His work since World War II had a definitely messianic ring to it; he was a man with a hope and a mission on behalf of society. He often was a leader of popular causes and movements.[4]

The "Third Force" or humanistic psychology of Abraham Maslow and others is an alternative philosophy to the two theories which have been dominant in the field of psychology: the behaviourism of John B. Watson and the psychoanalytical approach of Sigmund Freud. While Maslow saw that research on mental illness or on the average individual might be helpful and necessary, he was most concerned to study and understand psychological health. Maslow wanted to find what human beings were capable of becoming, what they had it in them to be. He did this by looking at a number of superior human beings, the creative avant-garde of humanity.[5]

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[3] Ibid., pp. 127-130; pp. 142-146.

[4] Ibid., p. 150.

[5] Goble, Frank G., The Third Force. New York: Grossman Publishers, 1970, p. 18.

Integral to Maslow's theory of human potential and actualisation is his theory of basic needs which he arranged in a hierarchy. As the most basic needs are met, human attention turns to satisfying ever "higher" needs. Self-actualisation needs are the pinnacle of this theory of motivation, but these needs are not felt until the more basic needs of physiology (food, sleep, etc.) and the needs for safety, belonging, love and esteem are met, at least to a subsistence level. Self-actualisation or growth needs (such as needs for truth, goodness, beauty, and justice) are just as real and important as the more basic human needs, but cannot emerge unless such things as hunger and freedom from fear are taken care of first.[6]

Maslow was an American and an academic, and taught at Brandeis University, Brooklyn College, and the University of Wisconsin. Like Ruether, he was outside the main stream of white Anglo-Saxon protestant culture; as with her, achievement for Maslow required a certain struggle against the tide. Maslow shares with Ruether a concern for contemporary causes and events; both have been inclined to be crusaders and innovators. Maslow was nearly thirty years Ruether's senior, even although his most productive period and time of recognition overlapped with Ruether's own. Maslow was a reformer, an optimistic worker within the system and the business corporation; revolution was not his wavelength, although the changes which he envisaged were basic and far-reaching. Abraham Maslow remains a man of the first world, theorising from within his context about how to create a better world for all people.

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[6] Ibid., pp. 36-41.

His books include Motivation and Personality (1954), New Knowledge in Human Values (1959), Eupsychian Management (1965), The Psychology of Science (1966), Towards A Psychology of Being (1968), Religious Values and Peak Experiences (1970), The Farther Reaches of Human Nature (1971-posthumous).

C. Connecting Link Between Maslow, Feminism, and Rosemary Ruether

Maslow's thinking and self-actualisation philosophy had a significant impact on the second wave of feminism which broke in America during the late sixties and early seventies, even although women, as such, were not a major theme in Maslow's work. Betty Friedan sounded the trumpet of reawakening feminism in North America with The Feminine Mystique in 1963 (to be sure, Simone de Beauvoir had already written the classic The Second Sex in France over a decade earlier).[7] Friedan found it necessary to protest Freud's ideas, especially as regards women, and devoted to this a whole chapter (deBeauvoir also commented extensively on the psychoanalytic point of view).[8] Yet, Betty Friedan relied heavily on the modern psychology of Abraham Maslow at the pivotal part of her work. Here, she is arguing for a woman's right to realize her own capacities, to grow, to fulfil herself, to work productively.

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[7]Friedan, Betty, The Feminine Mystique. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, Ltd. 1963.
de Beauvoir, Simone, The Second Sex. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1949.

[8]Friedan, Ibid., Chapter 5, "The Sexual Solipsism of Sigmund Freud." pp. 91-111.
de Beauvoir, Ibid., Chapter 2, "The Psychoanalytic Point of View", pp. 69-84.

What women need, she sees, is not more sex, or better adjustment to a submissive sexual role, but the freedom to grow up and the responsibility of devoting themselves to a goal beyond self and home. Friedan takes up Maslow's cry for self-actualisation, which in the hands of a feminist becomes the right of women to do work that affirms their being.[9] Other feminists have protested against the limitations of Freudian psychology and longed for a new psychology of and for women.[10] Ruether herself is critical of Freud (as well as of Jung).[11] But self-fulfilment remains the cornerstone of the feminist movement, even although Friedan's original use of Maslow has often been overlooked.

Rosemary Ruether is, no doubt, in debt to Betty Friedan, as all within the second wave of feminism are. Ruether sees Friedan as having discredited the Freudian romanticising and idealisation of the middle-class housewife, and as having done the most to precipitate the modern women's movement.[12] But Ruether rarely seems to mention Friedan's thinking or to be strongly influenced by it. Friedan's adoption of Maslow's self-actualisation philosophy might possibly have been passed on to Ruether, but if so, this has probably happened in a manner more

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[9]Friedan quotes and footnotes Maslow extensively in chapter 13, Ibid. In her concluding chapter 14, she moves on to spell out the implications of self-actualisation for women of her day and society.

[10]For example: Chesler, Phyllis, Women and Madness. New York: Avon Books, 1972. pp. 82-83. Also: Miller, Jean Baker, Psychoanalysis and Women. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1973. pp. 375-406.

[11]Ruether, Rosemary, New Woman, New Earth. New York: Seabury, 1975. Chapter 6, pp. 137f.

[12]Ruether, Rosemary R., From Machismo to Mutuality. New York: Paulist Press, 1976. p. 78.

indirect and contextual than through direct borrowing.

Ruether is writing not only from within the North American context of post-Freudian psychological presuppositions, but also as one who is a part of the women's movement which draws much from self-actualisation thinking. Ruether does not mention Abraham Maslow; likewise, Maslow did not say anything about Ruether, since he largely pre-dates her feminist contributions. But Maslow's philosophy of self-actualisation is important as a key to understanding Ruether's place within the feminist movement as well as within the thought of the North American seventies. The connection between Ruether and Maslow is not direct and explicit; nevertheless, it is one which should be considered. Does the meaning of freedom for Ruether have roots in the self-actualisation thinking so endemic in the seventies and in the women's movement and so well expressed by Abraham Maslow, its most influential exponent? To answer this question, we should consider the points of convergence and difference between Ruether and Maslow.

D. Points of Convergence Between Abraham Maslow and Rosemary Ruether

1. Pro-Woman Attitude

Maslow was strongly supportive of the equality and value of women. His point of view was basically appreciative of women's potential and understanding of her frustration. He did not share all of the philosophy of the modern women's movement as regards woman's different nature and the influence of sex-role.[13] Maslow died before the most intense

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[13]Maddi, Op.Cit., pp. 147-148.

days of activity in the women's movement. It would have been interesting to have seen how he would have responded to it. Yet, in 1970, he did make a very interesting comment on women's liberation using his motivation theory. Maslow saw that women should not reject home life, children, and a husband as being false, but rather that they needed to hang on to these things and to ask for more. Striving to meet woman's higher needs of self-actualisation does not mean rejecting her basic needs. He maintained that women had specifically feminine areas of fulfilment as well as the many other avenues of endeavour which they share with men. Women should not need to make an either/or choice of whether to be fully female or fully human.[14]

Perhaps some feminists might object to Maslow's occasional use of Jungian archetypes as well as of the common role stereotypes. He uses these, not as ends in themselves, but to illustrate the necessity of seeing persons in both an everyday physical way and as spiritual beings.[15] In this way, Maslow is hitting against the very tendency to dichotomize body and spirit that Ruether also sees as destroying male/female relationships. Maslow is advocating a fusion of the sacred and the concrete, a seeing of the transcendent in the particular.

Maslow admits that he is not completely sure of himself as regards self-actualisation in women.[16] He also makes the same observation as

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[14]Maslow, Motivation and Personality, pp. xvi-xvii.

[15]Maslow, Abraham, Religious Values and Peak Experiences. New York: Penguin Books, 1970. Appendix IV. pp. 103-106.

[16]Maslow, Abraham, Farther Reaches of Human Nature. New York: Penguin Books, 1971. p. 292.

Betty Friedan that many intelligent women show signs of a kind of meta-pathology of boredom, depression, self-depreciation and intellectual decay. Maslow's counsel to them to "immerse themselves in something worthy of them" not only worked, but echoes the advice of the women's movement.[17] In talking about creativeness, Maslow is willing to say that most definitions of what is creative are male-made and male-centred. He stresses that the creative process can never be fully understood until women's experiences and female creativeness are also studied and included. He recognises a difference in women's way of creating and he attaches to it great importance.[18] Again, this seems to be an echo-in-advance of a widespread concern of the women's movement.

Maslow comes closest to Ruether's stress on mutuality between women and men in several sections of The Farther Reaches of Human Nature. He discusses the relationship between the feminine/masculine complex within each person and how this affects man-woman attitudes and relations. Maslow locates the sexist problem (just as Ruether does) in a pathological dichotomizing of the feminine and the masculine within the person; integration is the path to better social mutuality.[19] Maslow emphasises this theme in a psychological way, while Ruether does it in philosophical terms.

Also in The Farther Reaches, Maslow touches on what many consider the roots of sexism: "Men have been afraid of women and have therefore

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[17]Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 49.

[18]Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, p. 59.

[19]Maslow, Ibid., pp. 153-156.

dominated them...women remind men of their own unconscious."[20] Here again, Maslow shows his agreement with Ruether's theory of dualism as the source of the problem. Maslow continues to note that the strongest people, self-actualising people, live beyond this fear of themselves and the other sex. Strength in a woman does not discourage the really healthy man, but rather attracts him. Ideally, Maslow sees that men and women help each other to grow toward fulfilment:

> "Therefore strong men and strong women are the condition of each other, for neither can exist without the other. They are the cause of each other...they are the reward of each other. If you are a good enough man, that's the kind of woman you'll get and that's the kind of woman you'll deserve." 21

In his seminar project on utopian psychology, Maslow included a question about male/female relationships. He wondered what society would be like where there was a healthy relationship between women and men. He wondered whether women would have different ideas about what constitutes the good society.[22] Here, too, we hear echoes of Ruether's wondering what it would be like in a world where mutuality between women and men reigned. Such a world has never been known, but both Maslow and Ruether dream of a time when the domination/submission hierarchy can be overcome.

2. Humanism

Both Ruether and Maslow think of themselves as humanists; they are

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[20] Ibid., p. 87.

[21] Ibid., p. 87.

[22] Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, p. 211.

preoccupied with persons, with the nature of human being.

Maslow states repeatedly that his own outlook is a part of a new world view, a new spirit of the times, which affects many disciplines, professions and institutions. This new comprehensive philosophy has a broader understanding of human life. Indeed, Maslow calls this new spirit, a "veritable revolution" because it is hopeful and positive in its evaluation of humanity.[23] Maslow sees the humanist resurgence as a "counter philosophy" in revolt against the mechanistic, dehumanised view of man and the world".[24] Values based on human considerations are returning to many areas of endeavour, even to non-personal sciences. And Maslow considers it his task to do his best to rehumanise his own field of study, psychology.[25] This view of Maslow's fits in well with the phenomenon of the liberation theologies and the increase of interest in the human within contemporary theology. Certainly, Ruether is a part of this movement of thought. Maslow and Ruether would find much common ground on the question of values and in a suspicion of a mechanistic and purely technological definition of worth and life.

If Maslow could be said to have had a faith, it probably would have come down to a belief that human nature is basically good. This, Ricardo Morant noted in his In Memoriam article, was Maslow's first

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[23]Maslow, Motivation and Personality. Preface to second edition, p.x. Also, Maslow, Abraham, Toward A Psychology of Being. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1968. p. 189.

[24]Abraham Maslow, The Psychology of Science. New York: Harper and Row, 1966, p. 2.

[25]Ibid., pp. 2-3.

principle. Yet, for all Maslow's passionate belief in human worth, he was not naive about the dark side of human possibilities.[26] Early in his career, Maslow wrote, "People are all decent underneath."[27] At the end of his life, although he came to basically the same conclusion, he saw more clearly the ambiguities and the potentialities for evil as well as good. He came to believe that human beings can become good and better under good conditions; conversely, he believed in the pathogenic possibilities of bad conditions.[28] Ruether, too, would affirm the worth of human beings, believing them to be primarily creatures, part of God's good creation. She, like Maslow, was not unaware of human evil and destructiveness; she begins with good creation, yet is quick to point out human disobedience.[29] Like Maslow, Ruether believes that human nature can be improved. Like him, she is essentially optimistic about the outcome of the human project, although her optimism, as we have seen, is an eschatological one rather different from Maslow's.[30] Maslow was militant about his humanist optimism; he was engaged in a struggle with the cynicism and despair which he saw as probably dominant in

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[26]Ricardo Morant, Abraham Maslow: A Memorial Volume. Ed. Bertha Maslow. Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Comp., 1972.p. 26.

[27]Maslow, Unpublished note, 1938, as found in:
Lowry, Richard J., A. H. Maslow: An Intellectual Portrait.Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1973. p. 17.

[28]Maslow, note dated March 1, 1970. Memorial Volume, p. 88.

[29]See, for example, the sequence in Ruether's Communion Is Life Together. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968.

[30]Maslow, October 14, 1969. in Memorial Volume, p. 90

Western culture.[31] Ruether's eschatology, which gives impetus to both hope and struggle in the present, has a similar effect to Maslow's aggressive kind of humanism.

Maslow devoted considerable effort to studying what made the best people good. But as Geiger has noted, Maslow does not ignore human weakness or evil, but reaches something like the Socratic view that badness in human beings is the result of ignorance.[32] Maslow at times is critical of others because they seem forgetful of the evil part of human nature, of the fact that not all persons respond to good conditions.[33] He notes that although humanity has a trend towards goodness, there are also counter-tendencies towards evil: people are afraid of their own possible goodness, and are ambivalent about the highest values of truth, justice, beauty, etc.; they make bad choices.[34] Maslow rejects categorically, on the basis of scientific evidence, the definition of human nature as "in essence, primarily, biologically, fundamentally evil, sinful, malicious, ferocious, cruel or murderous", and then he hastens to add, "but we dare not say there are no instinctoid tendencies at all towards bad behaviour."[35] The basic needs are not

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[31]Maslow, March 1970. Memorial Volume, p. 39.

[32]Henry Geiger, Introduction: Farther Reaches of Human Nature, by A. H. Maslow, p. xvii.

[33]Maslow, Abraham, Eupsychian Management. Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1965. p. 185.

[34]Maslow, Preface to the Second Edition. Motivation and Personality, p. xiii. See also, Towards A Psychology of Being, pp. 164-166.

[35]Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 118.

bad, but thwarting of them may well produce evil. Much of what has been called evil is, in fact, reaction to some kind of deprivation or threat. Certainly, Maslow did not consider the unconscious to be by nature bad.[36] Maslow notes that while humans have no instincts, they do have tendencies or "instinctoid" drives and needs. The nature of these tendencies, then, tells us something fairly definitive about the nature of humanity. Maslow sums up his findings on these as follows:

> "...clinical and psychological experience generally suggests that these weak, instinctoid tendencies are good, desirable, and healthy rather than malign or evil, and that the great effort to save them from annihilation is both feasible and worthwhile, and indeed, that this is a major function of any culture that would be called good." 37

What this means for Maslow is an attitude of never abandoning anyone as hopeless: "You should never give up on anyone ever. Man has an instinctoid higher nature. It's possible to grow this or stunt it. Society can do either."[38] Ruether shares Maslow's positive but realistic view of humankind. She, too, in the manner of a historian, has analysed human failing and frailty.

It need not be pointed out that Ruether, the theologian, is more than a humanist; as a theist, she is, of course, well aware of the transcendent. But it would also be wrong to suppose that the confessed atheist, Maslow, is "merely a humanist". While Maslow believed that the

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[36]Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 118.

[37]Maslow, Towards a Psychology of Being, pp. 195-196.

[38]Maslow, Dec. 31, 1969. Memorial Volume, p. 113.

goal of education (and of life) was to help the person be more fully human, he also realised that there are limits upon the human project, upon what people can make themselves into. Maslow would have liked to combine humanism with something he called transpersonal or trans-human.[39] As a humanist, Maslow believed in human good, yet saw the need for a new understanding of evil written out of caring concern for people. He remained puzzled why so few fulfilled the potential they were born with, even when the opportunity was there.[40] Although Maslow would hate to have admitted it, this surd element in human character comes very close to what has been called 'sin' by the theologians. Ruether, like Maslow, affirms the goodness of human beings and yet recognises the existence of evil within human nature.

3. Wholeness

Maslow joins Ruether in advocating a holistic approach to life. Maslow echoes Ruether's concern for overcoming false dualisms. While Ruether locates the source of these historically in a meshing of hellenistic gnosticism and Judaic apocalyticism, Maslow views dualism from a scientific and experiential standpoint. Both thinkers have a common understanding of a schizophrenic division in Western thought between emotion and intellect, between religion and science, between body and spirit. Both see many of the problems of contemporary soc-

[39]Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, p. 51.
Also: Preface to Second Edition (1970), Religious Values and Peak Experiences, p. xvii.

[40]Maslow, Preface to Second Edition, Towards a Psychology of Being, p. iv.

iety as linked to false polarizations in our thinking and acting. And both see health as a transcending, synthesizing healing of the dichotomies in our world-view. Maslow, in his psychological fashion, notes that this type of integration is a characteristic of self-actualising people.[41]

Maslow's holism is not all at a clinical level. Indeed, much of his theory is rooted in his study of the B-Values (Being-Values) or what Maslow also calls "the far goals, the ultimate goals." Maslow sees a deep inter-relation between these values or ultimate goals; in fact, he finds that they all seem to be defined in terms of each other. These values are certainly not mutually exclusive, but coordinate, and any isolation or shutting off of these values from each other (for example, seeking truth at the expense of justice) is pathological. Otherwise said, B-Values are both a pluralism and a unity; this is what wholeness is.[42] Maslow's theory of motivation does not divide needs into "good" and "bad", but rather serves as a basis for re-integration of our understanding of human nature.[43] Maslow warns strongly against "either-or, black-white" type thinking which is the essence of polarization; the authentic person integrates and finds balance. Maslow sees the truly religious person as the one who can hold in a unity both the mystical moment and the more external and organisational aspects of faith.[44]

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[41]Maslow, Towards A Psychology of Being, p. 40.

[42]Maslow, Eupsychian Management, pp. 119-121.
Also, Towards A Psychology of Being, pp. 82-84.

[43]Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, p. 317.

[44]Ibid., pp. 331-332.

If Maslow is holistic on the more abstract philosophical levels, he is even more so as he approaches the psychology of the individual. He states repeatedly and strongly that the most basic presupposition of his motivation theory is that the person acts and reacts as a whole and cannot be understood by isolating specific drives or needs.[45] In studying self-actualising individuals, Maslow reported that they combined an ability to think in abstract terms without ever giving up a feeling for concreteness. They also had experiences of deep insight when they had a vision of the unity of the whole and of life.[46] Maslow notes that it is "obsolete to dichotomise" reason and emotion; rather than being opposed, these two are synergic in the healthy individual. Therefore, Maslow sees the non-rational not as anti-rational, but as being essentially pro-rational.[47] In his approach to the individual, Maslow is saying something which is very similar to Ruether's abhorrence of the split between spirit and matter in Western thinking. While Ruether is talking in a cosmic way, she is also talking about persons; while Maslow is dealing with individuals, he is also giving us a theory of human nature. Both Ruether and Maslow treat human persons as whole beings, with perceptions of a whole reality. When one sees the work of Ruether and Maslow together in this respect, one can only agree with Maslow's fervent protestation that science and

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[45] Maslow, Motivation and Personality, pp. 19-21. Also, Psychology of Science, pp. 11-12.

[46] Maslow, Towards a Psychology of Being, pp. 88-89.

[47] Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 3.

religion are dichotomised only to the detriment of both.[48]

As Ruether saw the need for theologians to become generalists in considering ultimate questions about humanity, Maslow advocates the need for a holistic-dynamic style of doing science as opposed to an atomistic, static, and taxonomic one.[49] They both believe in a functional approach to their discipline; they both are primarily concerned with relevance to the human dilemma. Maslow stresses the fact that "normative zeal", interested commitment, is not only possible to combine with scientific pursuit, but a real prerequisite to a stronger and more meaningful science. Objectivity needs not to be defined in terms of disinterest, but rather in terms of accepting and non-interfering Taoistic knowledge. This corresponds to Ruether's appeal for "advocacy scholarship".[50] Maslow recognises the complementary plurality and diversity of specialisations and interests within science. He thereby assumes a teamwork approach to science rather like Ruether's.[51]

While Maslow stressed the necessity of hard and systematic work, he pointed out the tendency of much current scientific endeavour to emphasise too much the importance of technique. Maslow centred more

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[48]Maslow, Religious Values and Peak Experiences, Chapter 2, "Dichotomised Science and Dichotomised Religion", pp. 11-29.

[49]Ruether, Liberation Theology, pp. 2-3.
Maslow, Motivation and Personality, pp. 299-302.

[50]Maslow, Motivation and Personality, pp. xxiv-xxv.
Ruether, New Woman, New Earth, p. xii.

[51]Maslow, Ibid., pp. 4-5.

on problems than on means, thus calling science back to a more holistic outlook in the service of humanity. He refused to lose his vision of holism amidst the forest of methods.[52] Maslow, the scientist, had much in common with the mystics, not only in his sense of holistic vision, but also in his awareness of mystery and wonder at the heart of existence: "Not only does science begin in wonder, it also ends in wonder."[53]

4. Mutuality

Mutuality is the relational side of wholeness. It is not something different from wholeness, but the carrying out of what wholeness is in human relationships. While Ruether uses the term mutuality often, Maslow talks more frequently about synergy. While the synergic concept can be used to describe the working together of forces within the individual towards integration, Maslow uses it especially to speak about his ideal for society and institutions. Synergy in society means a working together for the good of all concerned rather than a relational arrangement of competition and rivalry.

Maslow's concept of synergy, or mutuality, is based on the work of Ruth Benedict, the anthropologist. In her last years, Benedict was working on a concept of comparative sociology by which cultures could be compared by analysing whether they were high synergic societies or low synergic societies. Cooperative, sharing societies resulted in

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[52]Maslow, Ibid., pp. 11-18.

[53]Maslow, Psychology of Science, p. 151.

likeable secure people and institutions; uncooperative, rivalry-ridden cultures turned out insecure, surly, nasty people. In societies where synergy was high, virtue paid and the line between selfishness and unselfishness was largely erased. High synergic societies had ways of sharing wealth, so that the good of one was the benefit of all. And in high synergic societies, religion had a comforting, supportive nature. Maslow fused Benedict's theory with his own ideas and experience (in particular his research amongst the Northern Blackfoot).[54]

As Maslow grappled with the ideal of the good society, he felt that the foundation of any utopia or eupsychia would have to be high synergic institutions. Systems of human management would need to be found where people are expected to work for the common good rather than set at each other's throats.[55] Maslow was particularly interested in leadership in the good society which must be functional, for the good of all, and dedicated to the B-Values.[56]

Maslow does not talk about synergy in his treatment of male/female relationship. He is somewhat less preoccupied with this particular kind of relationship than Ruether, yet he seems to be going in the same direction in this area. This is evident in Maslow's study of love in self-actualising people. He notices the seeming ability of healthy people in love to become more completely themselves and yet transcend

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[54] Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, Chapter 14, pp. 191f.
Also: Eupsychian Management, pp. 88-91.

[55] Maslow, Eupsychian Management, pp. 20-21.
Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, p. 200.

[56] Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, p. 200
Maslow, Eupsychian Management, "Notes on Leadership", pp. 122-132.

their own individuality towards fusion with another person. Healthy love is characterised by great unpossessive respect both for the other and for oneself; needs, cares, responsibility are shared as if the two were one person. Maslow points out that really healthy men are attracted to women who are also strong, healthy and capable of being partners and equals.[57] At the end of his life, Maslow shows that health implies a shift away from contempt for subordinate status and a "desexualizing of the statuses of strength and weakness and of leadership so that either man or woman can be, without anxiety and without degradation, either weak or strong as the situation demands."[58]

Both Ruether and Maslow are in agreement that ideal relationships encourage growth and the realisation of human potential. Both are aware that traditional role definitions can be set aside as persons become equal and loving partners. Both would stress the importance of creating the good society where mutuality could be the way of life.[59]

5. Transcendence

Maslow, like Ruether, had a strong sense of the existence and the importance of the transcendent. Although Maslow is not a theist, he is a mystic, a theorist in ultimate realities, an ethicist dedicated to values. He recognised that many contemporary theologians talked about God and the meaningfulness of the universe in the same way in

[57] Maslow, Motivation and Personality, Chapter 12, "Love in Self-Actualising People", pp. 181-202.

[58] Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, p. 353.

[59] Maslow, Ibid., p. 87.

which he talked about B-Values.[60] While Maslow was a humanist, he was also keenly interested in the beyond.

Much of Maslow's thinking on transcendence centred on what he calls "peak experiences". These experiences Maslow had had himself, and he also noted that they were a very common phenomenon amongst his self-actualizing people. While Maslow had been working on his views of peak experiences for some time, they became known to most of his readers in 1962, with the publication of Toward A Psychology of Being.[61] Maslow spent considerable time and energy defining and describing this experience; it was a moment of highest happiness and fulfilment. It was a mystic or oceanic feeling and vision, a moment of acute vision, love, awareness of meaningfulness.[62] While formerly these experiences were solely the domain of religious thinkers, Maslow is convinced that now they are properly the study of scientists as well; they are a part of the natural world. Maslow sees these experiences as the property of individuals and as a possible unifying feature of all the higher religions.[63] Lowry notes that it is with his studies of peak experiences that Maslow begins seeking, not only a fuller understanding of human nature, but also, far beyond this, the meaning of all reality.[64]

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[60] Lowry, Op.Cit., pp. 51-52.

[61] Maslow, Toward A Psychology of Being, Chapt. 6, "Cognition of Being in the Peak Experiences", pp. 71-74.

[62] Maslow, Motivation and Personality, pp. 164-165.

[63] Maslow, Religious Values and Peak Experiences, pp. 19-20;pp.28-29.

[64] Lowry, Op.Cit., pp. 51-52.

In Religious Values and Peak Experiences, Maslow details what happens in peak experiences. During them, people have a perception of the wholeness and goodness of the world; they are both self-forgetful and aware of their unique worth and identity; they lose their sense of consciousness of time and space; they are more loving, accepting, and spontaneous. Peak experiences often have after-effects on people that result in a change for the good.[65] It is striking that Maslow's detailing of the meaning of transcendence in Farther Reaches of Human Nature is more thorough than, but basically similar to,his earlier description of what happens during peak experiences.[66] Clearly, the two are inseparable in Maslow's thought. He gives transcendence this definition: "Transcendence refers to the very highest and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating, as ends rather than means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to other species, to nature and to the cosmos."[67]

Ruether does not tie transcendence to something as individual as a peak experience. But in her treatment of the history of Christian experience in the Radical Kingdom, she is constantly aware of the inbreaking of the Spirit in new and startling ways. She is very aware of

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[65]Maslow, Religious Values and Peak Experiences, Appendix A, "Religious Aspects of Peak Experiences", pp. 59-68.

[66]Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, Chapter 21, "Various Meanings of Transcendence", pp. 259-269.

[67]Ibid., p. 269.

the power of visions, the mystic moment. She describes times of celebration, of knowing wholeness and meaningfulness, especially in connection with social action and communal worship. While Ruether is not so interested in individual ecstatic experience and in detailing it, she is constantly reminding us of the need for a sense of the transcendent in the arena of human history.

Ruether and Maslow seem even more similar in their views of transcendence when we turn to values. Perception of ultimate values is an integral part of Maslow's peak/transcendent experience.[68] Ruether stresses the concept of creation and new creation: she sees the goal of human activity to be becoming all we were created to be. Likewise, Maslow believes in the ideal fusion of facts and values, when the ought becomes the same thing as the is. He would say that one must become what they really are, that the deepest reality determines what should be. Maslow believed that one caught a glimpse of this reality in the peak experience; and that healthy people were both more perceptive to how things are and to how they should be.[69] Maslow points out that people need a system of values and understanding, a frame of reference and a cause to be devoted to.[70] Maslow's far goals, or B-Values, sound very much like what theologians have called the Kingdom; and Maslow has a "now but not yet" philosophy of Being and Becoming

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[68]For example, see: Maslow, Toward A Psychology of Being, pp.82-84.

[69]Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, "Fusions of Facts and Values", Chapter 8, pp. 101-120.

[70]Ibid., p. 363.

that reminds one of eschatologically oriented contemporary theologians like Ruether.[71] Both Ruether and Maslow give us an ideal of society and individuals striving to become most truly themselves. Ruether uses the creation motif, Maslow talks about B-Values, but both are meshing together what truly is and what should surely be in order to give life direction and meaning. One might say that both Ruether and Maslow are united in their similar vision of a coming and present day of wholeness, justice, beauty and love. For both, then, transcendence is not primarily an "above" or a "beyond", but a hope and a goal for human beings to follow. Lowry points out that Maslow's theory of Being in the peak experience, while based on his careful studies of self-actualising people, is unproved.[72] Indeed, one can never definitely hope to prove such a vast theory or pin down scientifically what theologians call the Kingdom of God.

6. Utopian Hopes

Like Ruether, Abraham Maslow had a vision of the good society. Maslow invented the word Eupsychia to name his version of a normative society. Eupsychia he defined as a community of one thousand self-actualising people in a sheltered location where they would not be interfered with; it was to be a community moving towards psychological health. Maslow's ideal society was one which was no mere dream, but which was possible through the improving of the real world.[73] Maslow

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[71] Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, p. 108. For a listing of the B-Values, see Religious Values and Peak Experiences, pp. 91-94.

[72] Lowry, Op.Cit.,p. 61.

[73] Maslow, Eupsychian Management, p.xi.

ran a graduate seminar on utopian social psychology because he believed that goals for social change should be stated; he thought social criticism was not enough and that alternatives must be presented. He believed in reform, in slow revolution, but did not see progress as inevitable. A social vision and goals were necessary to point the direction for pragmatic action.[74] This projecting of social ideals can be seen as an obvious next step in Maslow's study of psychological health.

Maslow's Eupsychia is based on his concept of what produces individual health and fulfilment. He assumes that one must know what health is before one can describe the healthy society. Yet, Maslow also recognises that social transformation can only come about through changing the structures of society. He sees that changing people one at a time is not a practicable method for massive improvement of society. Therefore, Maslow would deal with conditions on a more global, holistic basis.[75]

Maslow conceived Eupsychia as being a place where the needs of people, whether they be basic needs or higher needs, would be deeply respected. There would be more room for free choice, less pressure towards conformity. It would be a loving and accepting society of a Taoistic "let-be" sort. Like Ruether, Maslow sees his ideal society as being philosophically anarchic.[76] Ideally, the good society would

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[74]Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, Chapter 15, "Questions for the Normative Social Psychologist", pp. 203-215.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Maslow, Motivation and Personality, pp. 277-278.

be a co-operative, highly synergic one. Here, too, Ruether's vision is similar. Although Maslow does not connect religion with Eupsychia, his ideals for human beings and his conception of B-Values come close to the faith behind many utopian communal experiments. While Maslow would see his ideal society as secular in conception, yet it is not totally secular in the sense of being unconnected with ultimate meaning and values.

Since Eupsychia was for Maslow a projection of the goal, he felt a considerable sense of mission, or vocation, in his efforts to help humanity. One could say that Maslow had a certain near messianic sense of the need to save the world, the need to bring about a new day. He saw his work as helping to bring about the new society. He was aware that he had an urgent need to give his specific contribution.[77] But he was very aware that the demand for perfection now could be dangerous and counter-productive. Over-high expectations for transformation could result in disgust and depression with the present reality.[78] Like Ruether, Maslow saw both the danger and the beauty of the messianic impulse.

7. Struggle and Hard Work

Whatever the popular conception of growth psychology, Maslow did not see human potential unfolding in an effortless, painless way. Like Ruether, and like Gutierrez, Maslow believed that people are called to

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[77]Frick, Willard B., Op.Cit., pp. 30-31.

[78]Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. xxii.

struggle, to work hard, towards their goal. Maslow did not see attaining fulfilment as a mere natural progression without effort. He did not see lack of symptoms as necessarily healthy, but recognised that there are situations in which guilt, or conflict, or anxiety are extremely appropriate and desirable. He did say that pain and grief might well be necessary for true growth, that people must not be overprotected from the hurt which might well have good ultimate consequences.[79]

Maslow, like Ruether, affirmed human effort towards a goal. He believed passionately in hard work, but not as an end in itself. It was to be part of a calling, a vocation. Personal growth cannot be such a vocation, but is rather a by-product of dedication and commitment to an important job that needs doing.[80] In Maslow's own case, his strong sense of vocation required making painful choices, deciding to narrow down his scope of attention out of dedication to work he saw as of great consequence.[81]

Maslow's theory of motivation is a description of the continual striving of humanity. "Man is a wanting animal and rarely reaches a state of complete satisfaction except for a short time."[82] Yet, at the same time, Maslow admitted that he felt the heights of awareness, B-cognition, in self-actualizing and receptivity.[83] This high plateau,

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[79]Maslow, Psychology of Being, pp. 6-8.

[80]Maslow, Eupsychian Management, p. 6.

[81]Frick, Op.Cit., pp. 28-31.

[82]Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 24.

[83]Maslow, Memorial Volume, p. 108.

however, is only reached by long effort and discipline; there can be no instant formula for living in the realm of the transcendent.[84]

Like Ruether, Maslow was passionately devoted to social change and transformation. He seemed to think of himself as a revolutionary, but hastened to say that his brand of revolution was slow, holistically involving society in all its institutions and aspects. He believed in pragmatic change through design and planning. Maslow rejected the idea of simple, quick solutions on the part of a great messianic leader. He recognised that change would take a big effort by many people of diversified kinds and abilities working in grass-roots situations. Maslow, like Ruether, stresses teamwork and the importance of clear unifying goals.[85] Maslow, like Ruether, while endorsing the principles behind the radical student unrest of the sixties, was also not happy about the abrasive methods used which could only be counter-productive and provoke negative reaction. Interestingly, Maslow does step out of his "first world" setting to note that there well might be situations (and he names Cuba) where reform cannot happen until abrupt revolution makes continuing change possible. In these cases, revolution is the first step in the slow, patient, hard work of reform.[86] If Maslow had been based in the "third world" situation, he might well have been supportive of the abrupt overthrow of tyrannical establishments which effectively make all peaceful change impossible. Ruether shares his basic

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[84]Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, p. 108.

[85]See Maslow, Eupsychian Management, "The Theory of Social Improvement: The Theory of the Slow Revolution", pp. 247-260.

[86]Maslow, Memorial Volume, pp. 102-103.

approach to social change, but she is more aware of the cultural and political situations of other nations. Perhaps this might make Ruether seem "more revolutionary" than Maslow, but one must take into consideration the situations they are addressing.

E. Areas of Difference Between Abraham Maslow and Rosemary Ruether

The similarities between Abraham Maslow and Rosemary Ruether are real. Self-actualisation echoes many of the insights of feminist theology, Ruether included. Ruether and Maslow, self-actualisation and feminism, do belong to a certain day and age, to a certain common cultural scene. Americans both, it is to the same audience of liberal thinkers that they speak a message about wholeness and mutuality that has not been characteristic of all other times and places. The practical impact of Maslow's psychology and Ruether's theology has been strikingly similar.

But beyond the apparent likenesses, the differences are probably more profound and far reaching. Although the conclusions arrived at often look alike, the sources of the ideas of Ruether and Maslow are very different. Maslow is the believing atheist, while Ruether is the questioning believer. Maslow bases his research on scientific observation of human experience; Ruether is also interested in human experience, but as it is seen in the faith-story of a people over the centuries. Ruether explores the roots of Western culture, the impact of ideas and commitment on behaviour and belief. Maslow uses and creates modern psychology to explain values and character.

Although wholeness might be the key word in understanding both of

these thinkers, they did not both derive this concept from the same source. Ruether is very conscious of the Hebraic sources of her thought. She goes back to the roots of Judeo-Christian tradition to rediscover a way of understanding that has immense relevance to today. Maslow might well be influenced indirectly by Hebraic ideas, but, if so, he does not own this tradition. Maslow's Jewish background and the rich contribution of Jewish thinkers (although usually secularised ones) to psychology could possibly have helped to inform his work with its messianic urgency, its ethical earnestness, and its holistic respect for human beings. But Maslow did not claim this heritage as the source of his humanism. Maslow is rooted in the observation of the contemporary rather than in the critical study of the history of belief. Whereas Ruether owns her sources in Jewish thought and classical education, Maslow's beginning points were with Watson's behaviourism and Freudian psychoanalysis.[87]

What this means is that, while Ruether is more "radical" (i.e. goes to the roots of her culture for understanding and re-interpretation), she is also more "reformist" than Maslow because she sees herself as remaining within the context of a faith-story, and a people. Maslow, in many ways less predisposed to abrupt changes, is perhaps more "revolutionary" in the sense that he sees himself as developing

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[87]For biographical comments on the sources of Ruether's and Maslow's ideas, see:

Ruether, Rosemary, "Beginnings: An Intellectual Autobiography", in Journeys: The Impact of Personal Experience, ed. Gregory Baum. New York: Paulist Press, 1975. pp. 34-56.

Lowry, Richard, A. H. Maslow: An Intellectual Portrait. Monterey, California: Brooks, Cole Pub. Comp., 1973. Especially chapter 1, "Ideals and Over-Beliefs", pp. 1-16.

a theory of human motivation and values that does not draw on belief systems of the past. Maslow has rejected the resources of the past while Ruether finds insight in taking a critical look at the past's legacy. With this in mind, let us turn to specific areas of difference.

1. Theism and organised religion

Maslow was a militant atheist from an early age. He despised theism as superstitious and false; he felt even more strongly about organised religion. And yet, in Maslow's loud protestations, one hears the tones of a lover's quarrel. For, although Maslow was repelled by theism, he was also strongly attracted to it. Maslow had a strong sense of the holy, and experience like that of a mystic. In addition, Maslow had the Jewish intensity of interest in ethics and a messianic vision of a new world, but he never claimed in a religious way the Jewish faith of his parents.[88]

As Henry Geiger notes in his introduction to Maslow's posthumous The Farther Reaches of Human Nature, one of the striking things about Maslow's later thought is that he becomes increasingly "philosophical" as he grows older.[89] Maslow was deeply involved in understanding "metamotivation", the values and needs behind the best and highest of human endeavour. Maslow was convinced of the existence and power of Being-Values (B-Values as he calls them): Justice, Beauty, Truth, etc.

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[88]Richard J. Lowry, A. H. Maslow: An Intellectual Portrait. Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1973. pp. 12-15, 68-69.

[89]Henry Geiger, Op.Cit., p. xx.

These are not merely subjective feelings of human beings, but were seen by Maslow as objective realities outside individuals:

> "They (B-Values) are per se in their own right not dependent upon human vagaries for their existence. They are perceived, not invented. They are transhuman and transindividual. They exist beyond the life of the individual, they can be conceived to be a kind of perfection....and yet they are also human in a specific sense. They are not only his, but him as well. They command adoration, reverence, celebration, sacrifice. They are worth living for and dying for. Contemplating them or fusing with them gives the greatest joy that a human being is capable of." 90

This area is very close indeed to being theology. Yet Maslow himself affirmed his life-long humanistic faith that "supernatural intervention is not needed" within his conception of metamotivation.[91] Maslow also wondered to himself in his last days whether these meaningful, possibly absolute values were more than just humanistic and perhaps transhuman.[92] This was certainly a progression in thinking from his earlier days when he had believed that human beings had within them all the strength and potential that they needed, and that a person "doesn't have to fly to a God".[93]

Maslow, in many ways, was a mystic. In many ways, he was attracted to Eastern thought such as Taoism and Buddhism which he mentions not infrequently in a positive manner. In Maslow, the scientist and the

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[90] Abraham Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, p. 328.

[91] Ibid., p. 295.

[92] Ibid., p. 321.

[93] A. Maslow in a note dated August 14, 1944. Abraham H. Maslow: A Memorial Volume. Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Comp., 1972. p. 113.

mystic come together to affirm an experience of communion and of the incorporation of human beings into that which is beyond them, an absorption of the individual into the reality of the universe. Maslow even appreciates that his biological understanding of this experience may not be different from what people have traditionally called spiritual or religious experience.[94] In an interview shortly before his death, Maslow stated his agreement with Victor Frankl (who is very much a theist and a Jew) that "there is something beyond self-actualisation, something beyond the full identity and the real self...and I think I would...call it 'cosmo-genic'..."[95]

Richard Lowry goes so far as to suggest that Maslow's concept of "being" was parallel to religious ideas of God just as his concept of "self-actualisation" parallels traditional notions of salvation. Lowry points out that Maslow objected to an idea of a personal God, but that what he seems to subscribe to is remarkably similar to the God of the philosophers, Spinoza especially.[96] Indeed, Maslow wonders whether theologians such as Paul Tillich who define religion as "concern with ultimate concerns" are any different at all from humanists like himself. Maslow seems to be sympathetic to much contemporary theology, and shares its abhorrence of the notion of a white-bearded "Big Daddy" in the sky.[97]

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[94]Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, pp. 31-32.

[95]A. Maslow in Humanistic Psychology: Interviews with Maslow, Murphy, and Rogers, by Willard B. Frick. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1971. p.32.

[96]Lowry, pp. 71-72.

[97]Abraham Maslow, Religious Values and Peak Experiences. New York: Penguin Books, 1976. p. 45.

Rosemary Ruether, in contrast to Maslow, has always been a believer in God and a member of the Church. But she, too, protests against a God which humankind has made in its own image. Particularly, she and other feminists would protest a God who is thought of in purely masculine images and terminology. Ruether does not use the well-worn fourth-century thought-forms, but questions ruthlessly the formulations of the Church right back to its origins. Both Ruether and Maslow would reject the outmoded view of God as an "old man in heaven" remote from human nature. Ruether would be happy with talking about Being, as she herself has suggested the concept of God as divine matrix which is similar to Tillich's idea of God as "ground of all being".[98] Yet, where Maslow thinks in terms of mystic experience and non-personal abstracts, Ruether takes a historical approach, speaking of the concrete and contextual acts of God.[99] Ruether emphasises God's presence with and for people; Maslow talks rather about the god-like possibilities within human nature. There is a closeness in point of view, but there is also a subtle difference in whether you call the best and finest in persons natural and a part of human potential or whether you say that human beings have their ultimate source not in themselves, but in the Divine. Both Maslow and Ruether would agree that it is in people that we see transcendence, but they would differ as to whether this transcendence is natural and biological or more-than-natural and spiritual. But it is not right to stress this difference too strongly, because Ruether would oppose any

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[98] See this thesis, Chapter II B 1.

[99] See, for example, Ruether's Communion Is Life Together.

dividing of the natural and supernatural, and she would always be eager to affirm the goodness of all created things.

Both Ruether and Maslow are opposed to a gnosticizing splitting apart of matter and spirit; both would affirm the meaningfulness of life and the nearness of transcendence to and within human beings. Maslow devotes a large part of Religious Values and Peak Experiences to a discussion of the dangers of polarising science and religion.[100] Ruether is saying something similar in her continual opposition to dualism.

At the foundation of all true religions, Maslow sees the 'core-religious' or peak experience of the individual. These experiences, or revelations, he finds to be the essential after all cultural, linguistic and historical additives and distortions have been stripped away.[101] Ruether would be sympathetic here, but the difference lies in that Maslow sees these essential core-religious experiences as belonging to particular individuals, while Ruether sees the foundation of the faith in the experience of a group or community.[102]

Yet, it is striking that both Maslow and Ruether are interested in the problem of continuity, of what happens when the original vision, peak experience, or revelation is passed on through time and throughout the world. Both face the dilemma of how the ecstatic can become historical. Maslow sees the passing on of mere words or symbols without

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[100] See, for example, Chapter 2, "Dichotomised Science and Dichotomised Religion". Religious Values and Peak Experiences, p. 11f.

[101] Religious Values and Peak Experiences, pp. 19-21.

[102] See, for example, Ruether's Church Against Itself, p. 38.

the essential experience as idolatry.[103] Ruether addresses basically the same problem at great length in The Church Against Itself. Following Vahanian, she too would see fossilised experiences and expressions of faith as idolatrous--and iconoclasm as the responsibility of the truly faithful.[104] However, Ruether does affirm (as Maslow does not) that despite its dangers and limitations the institution is necessary.[105]

While the writings of both Maslow and Ruether show us two minds that are deeply critical of organised and institutionalized religion, they are basically different in their approaches because Ruether comments from within the institutional church while Maslow never became a part of any religious community. Maslow sees organised religion as the main villain, the biggest enemy of true religious experience.[106] He sees the churches as dangerous when society hands over to them the custodianship of Being-Values.[107] These values, all spiritual quests and questions, are for Maslow too important to be the property of organised religion. He sees them as belonging also to science--as areas which require study and description besides appreciation. Ruether would agree that faith must be open to the questioning and probing of the best minds and to the rigours of historical criticism. Indeed, the Catholic modernist, Alfred Loisy, is one of Ruether's special heroes because of

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[103]Maslow, Religious Values and Peak Experience, p. 24.

[104]See, for example, Ruether, Church Against Itself, pp. 194-204.

[105]For example, Ruether, Church Against Itself, p. 207.

[106]Maslow, Religious Values and Peak Experiences, p. viii.

[107]Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, pp. 310-311.

this. Like Maslow, she would not want ultimate concerns to be limited to institutions. But she is keenly aware of the need for a continuing community of faith.[108]

One of Maslow's chief objections to organised religion is that it seems to "de-religionize' the whole of life. When religion becomes a separate ecclesiastical department, other parts of life are deprived of a sense of transcendence. Maslow even suggests that conventional religion might well be a kind of defence against truly shattering experiences of the 'holy'.[109] Richard Lowry comments that Maslow was not seeking a secularizing of religion, but rather a re-sacralising of the whole of life. Lowry notes,

> "Indeed, he seemed to hold the view that religion and science at their best are really quite the same thing--the endeavour to know...and to live in accord with...reality as it really is. He plainly saw, however, that, just as religion is not presently at its best, neither is science." 110

Ruether, from her perspective on the inside of the Christian community, would know what Maslow was speaking of, for she too suggests that a "desacralising of the church also implies a corresponding desecularisation of this world."[111] But Ruether suggests that the separate and unworldly pattern of Christian existence is being set free by a new eschatological ethic to serve and to live amidst the world. Ruether sees clearly the tension between community of faith and self-absolutising

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[108]For example, Ruether, Church Against Itself, pp. 159-164.

[109]Maslow, Religious Values and Peak Experiences, pp. 30-33.

[110]Lowry, pp. 72-73.

[111]Ruether, Church Against Itself, p. 210.

institution and, while she has much the same feelings about the institution as Maslow does, she continually affirms the existence and the possibilities of the community of New Being.[112] Both Maslow and Ruether reject with vigour the idea of a priestly caste which would be the exclusive guardian of the faith; both stress the need for those who have the gifts of service.

Maslow finds the holy in the everyday:

> "The great lesson from the true mystics...that the sacred is in the ordinary, that it is to be found in one's daily life, in one's neighbors, friends, and family, in one's backyard, and that travel may be a flight from confronting the sacred--this lesson can be easily lost. To be looking elsewhere for miracles is to me a sure sign of ignorance that everything is miraculous." 113

And this comes very close to Ruether's insistence on the goodness of all creation. Creation is where we encounter transcendence. But, while Ruether affirms that creation is from God and that God is incarnate in creation, she does not say that creation is God.[114] Neither, of course, does Maslow. But there is a difference between Ruether and Maslow in that creation's goodness for Ruether comes from God's creating action while, for Maslow, goodness and holiness, amidst the ordinary, are simply and inexplicably just there.

2. Individualism and Community

Being a psychologist, Maslow is almost by definition preoccupied

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[112] Maslow, Memorial Volume, pp. 44-46, on the possibility and dangers of service. For Ruether's views on ministry, see this thesis, Chapter II A 3.

[113] Maslow, Religious Values and Peak Experiences, pp. x-xi.

[114] See this thesis, Chapter II A 1.

with individuals rather than with people in community. In particular, his research into the characteristics of good human beings (sparked by his deep appreciation of his teachers Ruth Benedict and Max Wertheimer) shows us Maslow's interest in learning through the analysis of particular personalities. From his study of highly gifted individuals Maslow abstracts certain characteristics which seem to be common.[115] This is, of course, very different from Ruether's collective approach which is centred on community, society and the people of God.[116]

Maslow is keenly aware of the impact of society upon individuals. He sees the good society as one which provides persons with the greatest opportunities for growth and fulfilment; a good society is a healthy one. But he affirms that society is not completely responsible for the health of individuals. Maslow also asks the question, "How good a society does human nature permit?"[117] Especially towards the end of his life, Maslow is concerned with the good society, of using his insights into self-actualizing individuals in the realm of social understanding. But even here he builds upon a conception of what a truly healthy individual is.[118]

In his preface to the second edition of Religious Values and Peak Experiences, written only a month before his death, Maslow admits that

[115] See, for example, Chapter Two of Maslow's Motivation and Personality. (2nd edition) New York: Harper & Row, 1970. Also Chapter 11, "Self-Actualizing People: A Study of Psychological Health", pp. 149-180.

[116] See this thesis, Chapter II B 3.

[117] Maslow, Motivation and Personality, pp. 255-257.

[118] Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, Chapter 15. "Questions for the Normative Social Psychologist", pp. 203f.

he had shown some imbalance on the side of individualism in the previous edition. He notes a new appreciation for organisations and groups. He notes that the human need of kinship and belonging is itself one of the basic needs. Towards the end, Maslow speaks favourably of therapeutic groups: Synon, T-groups, encounter groups and growth groups.[119]

Growth groups for Maslow have many characteristics of what traditionally might be called a community, but they are not the same thing. Such a group permits honesty and openness, support and self-awareness. However valuable and therapeutic this may be, such groups do not have the underlying commitment which characterises successful and long lasting communities.[120] Although Maslow does speak more and more about groups, society, and people as a collectivity, he does not have a concept of community. In this he is clearly very different from Ruether who is interested from start to finish in the life of the Christian community. There is a gap in Maslow's thinking somewhere between unstructured groups and bureaucratic organisation. Ruether can see the Church not only as organisation, but primarily as a people with a commitment and a hope; if Maslow can see this, he does not speak of it. The binding nature of a commitment and a hope based on faith might be assumed in Maslow's strong feelings about his family and about the improvability of human nature. But Maslow does not pursue the same explicit enquiry into the dedication of a people to transcendence which

[119]Maslow, Religious Values and Peak Experiences, pp. xiii-xiv.

[120]See Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Commitment and Community. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972.

marks Ruether.

Probably this is because Maslow understands perception of the transcendent or religion as a completely personal and private affair. When the mystical mountain-top experience of the individual is shared, Maslow sees it as degenerating into structure and dead ritual.[121] While Maslow has much to say about personal spiritual experience, he seems to overlook the occurrence of communal peak experiences, such as seems to have been the case with the Exodus experience of the children of Israel and with the resurrection and pentecost experiences of the disciples. These communal experiences did change the lives of those who were a part of them, much as Maslow's peak experiences seem to give meaning to individuals' lives. Ruether is well aware of communal experience and of common history which bind an assortment of human beings into a covenant people.

3. Need Hierarchy

The need hierarchy is a distinctive element of Maslow's theory. He himself describes this theory as "holistic-dynamic".[122] This theory integrates understanding of human personality and gives articulation to the phenomenon of human growth. Human needs, although vastly different, are seen to be interrelated and interdependent. Human beings can be most truly themselves as basic needs are met and their attention turns to more spiritual considerations. This hierarchy Maslow divides into

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[121]Maslow, Religious Values and Peak Experiences, pp. 27-29.

[122]Maslow, Motivation and Personality.

five levels: most basic, the physiological needs (food, sleep, etc.); secondly, the safety need (security, order, freedom from fear); thirdly, the belonging and love needs (affection and a place in a family or group); fourthly, the esteem needs (self-esteem and the respect of others); and finally, at the peak of the hierarchy, the need for self-actualisation, or growth needs. Before one can ascend the hierarchy, the most basic needs must be met to a certain degree. That is, before one is primarily concerned about being loved, one must have enough to eat to ward off starvation; one can only worry passionately about justice and beauty when one has a certain minimum of self-respect and of sense of belonging. This in many ways corresponds to common sense knowledge of how people function.[123]

Yet Maslow notes wisely that this hierarchy is not a fixed order. While for most people this ordering of needs seems appropriate, there are exceptions: for example, the poet who starves rather than give up his vocation; the prophet who proclaims justice at the cost of his reputation and respect among his fellows. Sometimes, Maslow offers us reasons for these exceptions.[124] At other times, he seems uncertain as to exactly why people whose basic needs are satisfied, as for example in an affluent society, do not pass on to higher considerations. At the end of his life, Maslow was grappling with the notion that a pro-life or pro-death attitude was responsible for the difference between those who, having satisfied their needs, do self-actualise and those

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[123] Maslow, Motivation and Personality, Chapter Four, "A Theory of Human Motivation", p. 35f.

[124] Ibid., pp. 51-53.

who do not. At the moment of Maslow's death, this area was one that was in question.[125]

Rosemary Ruether does not have a "hierarchy of needs" theory like Maslow. She would appreciate the holistic and dynamic concept of humanity that it represents, the acknowledgement that the spiritual aspects of a person are an integral part of the biological human.[126] But, at times, Maslow implies that people whose basic needs are frustrated are not fully human or are to be seen as "sick".[127] And here Ruether, while agreeing with Maslow's desire that the basic needs of all humans should be satisfied, would affirm the worth and human dignity of the poor. It might even be that a less than careful reading of Maslow's theory could justify selfish materialism and self-advancement in the name of "self-actualization". A philosophy of affluence might conceivably be supported by this theory, which seems to make good conditions the prerequisite for the highest of human values.[128] Again, at the end of Maslow's life, there were indications that he sensed that another factor was involved:

> "It is also socially realistic today to bet that most newborn babies...will never rise to the highest levels of motivation because of poverty, exploitation, prejudice, etc. There is, in fact, inequality of opportunity in the world today...And yet, it is also unwise to give

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[125] Frick, pp. 37-40.

[126] Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, p. 314.

[127] Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 57.

[128] The reaction of one of my first year psychology students at the National University of Zaire to Maslow's theory was, "Is there, then, no hope for us, the poor?" Maslow's theory does not adequately explain and appreciate the life and worth of the poor.

> up the possibility of metalife completely and in principle for any living person." 129

Ruether would probably say it more strongly: for her, not only must we not abandon hope for any of the least, but we must actively and aggressively proclaim their worth and advance their right to equal opportunity. Maslow focuses on human needs, Ruether speaks of human promise. While both Maslow and Ruether are humanists, human worth is for Ruether basically a matter of re-creating what God has made persons to be, while Maslow finds human values in the realization of the capacities that each person has within him. Thus, human nature has an eschatological and creationalist slant in Ruether, whereas Maslow sees the worth of humanity as contained uniquely within itself.

4. Commitment to the Poor

With both Ruether and Gutierrez, we have noted a fundamental siding with the poor. Maslow is different. But this difference is not one which is to be described in terms of complete opposites, but which consists rather of more subtle gradations. Coming from an underprivileged and marginalised background, Maslow is keenly aware of the nature of disadvantage. He himself sees his hierarchy theory of needs and potential as "an extremely strong argument in favor of absolute equality of opportunity for every baby born".[130]

Yet, Maslow's point of departure is with the strong and the advan-

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[129] Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, p. 315.

[130] Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. xviii.

taged. Much of his important research was with gifted and fulfilled people. In addition, Maslow is positioned within the intelligentsia of the United States of America; he is dealing with a situation to which affluence is the backdrop. While he is definitely for the disadvantaged, he perceives social change as something that might well begin with industry and enlightened management. He has a holistic view of society which sees that all of society is related and that no single change will automatically transform the whole society, although it might affect it all minutely. But industry and management seem to him to be the place to start most effectively.[131]

Maslow's work with strong individuals has made him aware of one of the problems of being for the poor. How can our compassion for the weak be made to avoid a contempt for the strong? He is not speaking primarily in material terms here, but the problem is one which is relevant in many areas. Maslow sees as evil a destructive resentment of those who are strong, powerful and good.[132] This may be because he views the ideal societal arrangement as synergic (i.e. what is good for the betterment of one works for the good of all) rather than competitive. This view is very different from a Marxist opposition between oppressors and oppressed.

A certain ambivalence towards affluence is noticeable in Maslow. On the one hand, he states that "a certain amount of spirituality is the

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[131]Maslow, Eupsychian Management. Homewood, Illinois: Richard Irwin, Inc. and the Dorsey Press, 1965. pp. 247-248.

[132]Maslow, Toward A Psychology of Being. (2nd edition) New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1968. p. iv.

extremely probable consequence of a satisfied materialism...the religionist...had better start with food, shelter, roads, etc. which are more basic than sermons."[133] On the other hand, he notes the philosophical and spiritual bankruptcy which afflicts contemporary affluent societies with a sense of meaninglessness and absence of values.[134] A year before his death in 1970, Maslow noted that deprivation, or potential deprivation, seems to have the value of forcing people to appreciate what they have, while plenty might well dull a person's zest for living. Yet, people who are self-actualizing seem to be better able to withstand the numbing effect of luxury. For most people, happiness seems to abide in the striving, while self-actualizers are able to deal creatively with having enough.[135] This ambiguity is not uniquely Maslovian. The complexity of the effects of having and not-having is found in many serious writers; certainly liberation theology also has dealt with this issue.[136] What does distinguish Maslow's work is that it is speaking out of the situation of affluence to affluent people; he is not primarily speaking to the poor.

5. Creation/Creativeness

Creation/new creation is a major concept of Rosemary Ruether.

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[133]Maslow, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, p. 316.

[134]Maslow, Religious Values and Peak Experiences, p. 38.

[135]Maslow in Memorial Volume, (ed.) Bertha Maslow, pp. 108-109.

[136]See, for example, Gutierrez' study on poverty, chapter 13, Theology of Liberation. Trans. Sister Caridad Inda & John Eagleson. London: SCM, 1974.

Creativeness is an extremely important idea for Abraham Maslow.[137] But these two major themes are more different than alike. Creation in theology, and in Ruether, is the unique work of God, the making of something new out of chaos. Creativeness, in psychology, and in Maslow, is a human characteristic and capacity. To be sure, there are points of contact. Both are talking about making new, about something that is holistic and very good. Both see human health (or salvation) in becoming what we really are, in returning to our true nature.[138] Realisation of humanity's created nature in many ways corresponds to the creativity of the self-actualised person. Maslow's creativity, however, is a quality that one finds only in a few, in those who are self-actualizing, or in those with a special talent. In theology, on the other hand, realisation of one's created nature remains a challenge to all people, even although all people do not find the possibilities to do this. Maslow's concept of creativeness is very near to, if not identical with, his concept of self-actualisation.[139] This echoes the theological insight of creatureliness as being the proper understanding by humanity of who they are. But there is a very basic difference: humanity at its best, for Ruether, is creature and new creation; but for Maslow, it is creator.

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[137] See, for example, Farther Reaches of Human Nature, Part II, pp. 55-100.

[138] Ibid., pp. 107-108.

[139] Ibid., p. 55.

6. Language and Discipline

A striking difference between Abraham Maslow and Rosemary Ruether is that of the vocabulary, conceptual framework, and academic discipline which each uses very much in his or her own way. Maslow thinks of himself as a scientist and a psychologist; Ruether's orientation is that of a historian and theologian. Yet, because both are creative thinkers, their work does not stop at the traditional boundaries of their own fields. Both are preoccupied with something vaster than their specialities, with the meaning and worth of human beings, with transcendence. Maslow and Ruether, being essentially creative persons, have a unique and personal way of using language and concepts. They invent words or phrases when nothing else seems to exist which is adequate for their message. Maslow especially creates new words and expressions: for example, peak experience, hierarchy of needs, self-actualisation, eupsychian.[140] Ruether stubbornly refuses to use the well-worn terms of the creeds, speaking in a modern way to expand and to explain beliefs. Much of the difference in literary style can be traced to the common creativeness of Ruether and Maslow as well as to their common intense desire to communicate the newness of their insights.

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[140]Robert Tannenbaum observes this characteristic in Maslow in Abraham H. Maslow: A Memorial Volume, (ed.) Bertha Maslow. Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1972. p. 35.

So also: Harry Geiger, "Introduction: A. H. Maslow" in Farther Reaches of Human Nature, by Abraham Maslow. New York: Penguin Books, 1972. p. xv.

CONCLUSION

A. The Value of Rosemary Ruether's Contribution to the Modern Concept of Freedom

What is the significance of the theology of Rosemary Ruether? What does she have to contribute to contemporary thinking about freedom? Ruether herself noted that the significance of women's rising awareness might well be their location at the intersection of the liberation movements of the affluent world and the world of the poor. These movements appear to be running at cross-purposes with each other. Women might have the opportunity of bringing them together into a new humanity, reconciling body and spirit, ushering in a new day of communal social ethic.[1] Whether the women's movement and feminist theology have played this crucial role is yet to be seen. But certainly in the theology of Rosemary Ruether we find a unique coming together of what freedom means in the Western world and what it means in nations aspiring to emerge from dependence and underdevelopment. Ruether holds together global concerns with understanding of the personal. This is no small undertaking.

But is Ruether's concept of freedom simply a pasting together of first and third world liberation thinking? To answer this question we have looked at Ruether alongside both a Latin American liberation theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez, and the North American "guru" of the self-actualisation movement, Abraham Maslow. To be sure, Ruether's idea of freedom has much in common with both these thinkers; she does share

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[1] Ruether, Liberation Theology, New York: Paulist Press, 1972. pp. 123-124.

concerns from both realms of liberation thinking. She can speak the language of both worlds, although she is probably more attuned to Gutierrez' ideas than to Maslow's because she shares with Gutierrez a common faith-community commitment. Ruether is influenced by both worlds, and she speaks to both worlds. Her theology embraces the longed-for freedom of the advantaged as well as the sought-after liberty of the marginalised. But Ruether is not simply a composite of these two ways of thinking. We have seen that while she is very like both Maslow and Gutierrez, her understanding is different in some very important ways.

Although Ruether appreciates the truth expressed in the oppressed/oppressor paradigm of Gutierrez (using Marxist analysis), her theology points to the danger in such dualisms. Ruether wants to see, not the turning upside down of the social system, but a whole new system. Her vision is wholeness in which polarities are overcome and the relationship between persons and peoples is one of mutuality. Ruether is more interested than Gutierrez in the interrelationship of all oppressions and the need for liberation by all the enslaved.

Although Ruether's talk about wholeness and mutuality finds strong echoes in the thinking of Maslow about what makes a good, free, human being, her understanding of freedom has its roots in the faith-story of a people over the ages, as well as in contemporary commitment to action as a part of a community of belief. Ruether shares Maslow's practical and practising interest in human need, as well as his listening to and learning from present human experience. But Ruether's wholeness is more than personal integration and fulfilment; it is global, communal, and

theistic. Ruether takes evil and suffering far more seriously than Maslow, both in her giving priority to the poor and in her study of dualism.

Ruether's theology gives us both a basic explanation for the problem of oppression (wherever and whatever that might be) and a basic vision of what freedom looks like. She does not merely oppose non-freedom, but she offers us a way of seeing its cause, and therefore a way of finding hope for the future. The keystone of Rosemary Ruether's theology is her theory of how gnostic/apocalyptic dualism has invaded the Hebraic view of the goodness of all creation and distorted both understanding and practice. Ruether interrelates many situations of oppression by tracing in them this splitting-apart of consciousness, with its resultant projection, alienation, and loss of self-criticism. Ruether's view of dualism comes out of her background in classical culture, her interest in Hebraic thought, and her approach as a historical theologian. Ruether's basic vision of wholeness, of mutuality, of a completely renewed system of human community and caring is not one based primarily on scientific, psychological or sociological analysis, but one that arises out of the Hebrew's belief in creation as the gift and responsibility given by God. Ruether's hope is re-creation, the restoring of the wholeness of God's purpose for the earth and for all people. This vision of Ruether's cannot really be said to be "original". But she is reclaiming and making relevant what she sees as the foundation of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

In going to the sources of that tradition, Ruether questions orthodoxy more deeply than do many other liberation theologians. One of

Ruether's most vital contributions to contemporary theology might be just this. She shakes traditional statements of doctrine with her perception of what practice these doctrines have set in motion as well as of the situations out of which they arise. Ruether's study of messianism and her asking about the meaning of Jesus as the Christ are central to Christian understanding, and therefore, of radical importance. Ruether probably raises questions more than she provides answers. But she has pointed out critical areas for consideration in contemporary theology.

In dealing with the history of the human experience of God, Ruether also questions self-fulfilment as an adequate philosophy of life. Ruether suggests that affluent Christians have not taken seriously enough the long-term history of evil and suffering that make ideas of fulfilment irrelevant to so many of God's children. Can present reality possibly be a good creation, can God really be in control of a world where so much injustice is done? Theology has not yet solved the problem of God in a world so filled with evil.[2] Theories of self-actualisation do not deal with the question of why so many are deprived of the means of fulfilling life. Indeed, like much Western theology that refuses to take suffering seriously, human-potential thinking does not really touch the problem of justice and human pain. Religion is more than sublime peak experiences and personal growth. Ruether's theology reminds us of this.[3]

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[2]Ruether, "God-Talk After the End of Christendom". Commonweal, vol. 105, no. 12. June 16, 1978. p. 373.

[3]So too would James F. Fixx who, as a leading authority on jogging, has been at the centre of the North American self-fulfilment obsession.

Freedom for Ruether is not to be understood as merely being free from limitations, barriers, or deprivations. Freedom is in her theology a more positive state of wholeness, of new creation. The Anglican collect has said that in "God's service" is "perfect freedom". Ruether would be in tune with this in her emphasis on the goodness of creation which is becoming a reality through the continuing work of God and the struggle of human beings. Freedom for Ruether is both political and personal, both communal and individual. It is not an escape from history, but a deep involvement in it. Freedom for Ruether includes the right to participate in the on-going struggles of contemporary life, but not at the cost of family and home which she sees as a vital area for the personal and political expression and development of freedom. Freedom does not come through affluence, but rather Ruether points towards a new asceticism of committed groups that affirm the goodness of creation and who would change the world towards wholeness. Mutuality in freedom comes through the side-by-side struggle to realize the wholeness of new creation for all people. Freedom between men and women grows out of common commitment to God's cause of justice. The road to freedom is one of hope, risk, struggle, and questioning; for Ruether, freedom is born out of a joining together of prophetic and messianic impulses. This concept of freedom is a needed one in contemporary

[3](cont.) Fixx suggests that, in making running something of a religion, his generation has made of fulfilling their own potential a substitute for their lost faith in religion, government, marriage, and law. But Fixx clearly points out that the runner's self-sufficiency has nothing to do with the community, the caritas, that is at the centre of true religion. Beautiful experience and realised potential are not the same as religious belief and life. See James F. Fixx, "What Running Can't Do For You." Newsweek, Dec. 18, 1978. p. 21.

theology, in the thinking of the women's movement, and in the modern technological age.

B. The Sufficiency of Ruether's Basic Theory

Are the theories about dualism at the heart of Ruether's theology valid? Is dualism arising from Hellenistic Gnosticism and Judaic apocalypticism really the villain of so much tragedy throughout the ages? As we have seen, Ruether sees dualism developing out of a situation of human estrangement.[4] Dualism is the reaction of people whose world has fallen apart and whose gods have been shattered; it expresses insecurity and fear and also the need to escape from a situation in which there seems to be no more security. Dualism is a kind of negation of a world that no longer makes sense.

But, once set in motion, does dualism continue to re-create alienation? Ruether places great emphasis on the influence of idea and thought systems. But do the thought forms of the ancient world's reaction to the conquest of Alexander the Great still impose upon us numerous oppressions through our continuing split consciousness? Or is it that dualism is maintained in strength by recurring times of crisis, pain, and alienation? Certainly, one can readily observe that it is a frequent human reaction to deal with threat or insecurity by withdrawal--withdrawal from the real world by splitting the physical and the spiritual. It is my opinion that we are not so much the heirs of the Gnostics as we are living and reacting in gnostic-like ways of escapism or flight

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[4]See this thesis: Chapter II, A 2, p. 8.

as we continue to dualise the existence that we cannot quite cope with. Modern gnostic-like dualism, I believe, has its sources primarily in contemporary anxiety rather than being received by us through an underground stream that runs through the centuries of Christian spirituality and ethics.[5] I feel that the tradition of gnostic-like thinking is periodically reinforced by the psychological needs and fears of the times. I doubt that dualism is really a tradition in the sense of being a definite teaching passed on through the ages, but I see it more as a series of similar but unrelated human responses to times of crisis. Idea and context are constantly and complexly related, but Ruether seems to overestimate the impact of thought systems. With John C. Meagher, it is my opinion that Ruether overvalues ideology while undervaluing the effect and continuity of human feelings.[6]

As we have noticed, Ruether is vague in speaking of Gnosticism and what she means by it.[7] The absence of scholarly precision here makes me wish that this crucial point would be dealt with more completely.[8] Her theory is a fascinating one that helps to make sense of experienced

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[5]See E. R. Dodds, Pagan and Christian in An Age of Anxiety, Cambridge: University Press, 1965. Dodds indicates how Gnosticism and dualistic thinking were the product of wide-spread anxiety in the Hellenistic-Roman eras.

[6]Meagher, John C., "As the Twig Was Bent: Antisemitism in Greco-Roman and Earliest Christian Times". Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity, (ed.) Alan T. Davies. New York: Paulist Press, 1979.

[7]See this thesis: Chapter II, A 2, p. 9f.

[8]Marianne H. Micks, reviewing New Woman, New Earth, raises objections to the sweeping generalisations that Ruether makes, particularly regarding dualism. See Christian Century, vol. XCIII, no. 18. May 19, 1976. p. 498. See also John C. Meagher in Antisemitism, p. 2.

reality, but it would be strengthened by more precision at certain crucial points and made more convincing by considering further the psycho-dynamics of ideas and human needs. The continuing work of feminist New Testament scholar Elaine H. Pagels on Gnosticism might give further insight into the validity of Ruether's dualism theory.[9]

Besides utilising Gnosticism in her dualism theory, Ruether also draws on apocalypticism. Dualism is, for her, the major pit-fall of apocalyptic. As with Gnosticism, we note again that Ruether demonstrates something less than scholarly precision about the nature of apocalypticism, and indeed seems to equate apocalyptic and messianic impulses in a way that is not completely accurate.[10] Ruether understands apocalyptic polarisation more as a dualism of time (history versus super-history) than as the gnostic dualism of space (above versus below). Her inclusion of apocalyptic Judaism in her analysis of dualism adds a further dimension to the meaning of polarisation. Therefore, for her, dualism implies certain attitudes not only about the goodness of creation, but also about history and change.

Ruether sees the value of the apocalyptic vision beyond this world/age, but she would combine this with the realism and the here-and-now orientation of the prophetic tradition. Dualism would be overcome by putting together apocalypticism and prophetism. Ruether's discussion

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[9] See the brief article by Elaine Pagels in Womanspirit Rising, (eds.) Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow. New York: Harper and Row, 1979. pp. 107f. Also listed there are Pagels' various publications on Gnosticism.

[10] See this thesis: Chapter III C 2, p. 25f.
Meagher notes that Ruether often wrongly uses "apocalyptic" and "messianic" interchangeably. op.cit. p. 15.

of apocalypticism is very much connected with her dualism theory, since Ruether understands the polarisation that destroys wholeness not only as a division of hope into this-worldly historical expectation and supernatural intervention beyond history. Dualism is not just a statement about the polarisation of reality, but also a problem in the strategy of action towards recovering whole creation. More precision and clarity by Ruether on the nature and origin of apocalyptic would give her theories about dualism further credibility and cutting edge.

In addition, one asks the unanswerable question about how realistic is the possibility of Ruether's proposed ideal: the combination of the charismatic vision of the apocalyptic seer with the pragmatic and self-critical voice of the prophet who stands in the midst of the community. Certainly, Ruether has pinpointed the best points of both apocalyptic and prophecy and it is obviously true that a union of these best qualities of both is ideal. But just how possible is this? If Ruether is correct to assume Russell's definition of apocalyptic as an extension of prophecy, then this might be a realisable hope. But if apocalyptic and prophecy are as radically different as Von Rad would have us think, then a synthesis of the apocalyptic and prophetic traditions would not be a possibility so easily imaginable in the realm of reality.

On a more practical level, one wonders about the psycho-dynamic possibility of combining apocalyptic and prophetic functions. Is it really possible for an individual (or a community) to point out acutely and graphically the demonic in a particular society, and still be permitted to continue functioning within that society? Certainly Ruether is right in saying that all true prophets speak from within society. But apoca-

lyptic does more than speak critically, since by dividing all reality into good and evil it polarises. One wonders whether the uncompromising vision and articulation of apocalyptic can be humanly tolerable to a particular society. Ideally, the vision transforms the society; but if it does not, then the apocalyptic seer is forced either to leave the society or to modify the vision. In practical terms, a primary loyalty to the society often puts limits on the expression and conception of radical vision. I believe that we would be unrealistic to expect one individual to combine these qualities. The most we can hope for is the ability of the society not only to listen to the prophet in its midst, but to value and struggle to understand the vision of the apocalyptic seer at its margins.

Carter Heyward tells of exactly this kind of dilemma in her perceptive critique and comparison of the work of Mary Daly and Rosemary Ruether.[11] Ruether she casts as one who speaks from within the context of the Christian community, but who has not the devastating power to name (or "to spark") the evil as has the self-declared outsider Daly. Heyward sees the contributions of both, the radical participation of Ruether and Daly's unflinching ability to point out the demonic, as vital to the task of feminist theology. Indeed, it is crucial to the work of all theology. But the practical question of just how it is possible to combine these vital view points remains.

Indeed, Heyward might have an important point when she suggests that

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[11] Heyward, Carter, "Ruether and Daly: Theologians; Speaking and Sparking, Building and Burning", Christianity and Crisis. April 2, 1979. pp. 66f.

Ruether's villain, the theological construct of dualism, lacks clarity and a human face.[12] In identifying the fault with an abstraction, Ruether is spared the task of pointing specifically to the failing in human responsibility. This means that oppression in Ruether's work is made perhaps less threatening. This might mean that categories of persons are allowed to escape from their responsibility for involvement in oppression. But, on the other hand, it might also make it easier to deal with the problem of oppression and overcome it; for a frequent response to devastating threat is flight and withdrawal, i.e. further polarisation.

Ruether's emphasis on the influence of an ideology of dualism is certainly central to her theology. But it is not the most basic element in her concept of freedom (nor in her theology as a whole) and this should be kept in mind. At rock bottom, Ruether has based her theology on the Hebraic understanding of the very good nature of the creation of God. This God-made wholeness is freedom. Ruether's dualism theory is her way of explaining what happened to original goodness; it is through dualism that she finds a way to understand evil as well as a vision of how evil should be dealt with. Although elements in Ruether's important dualism theory might be faulted, her underlying foundation in Hebraic creation theology remains untouched. Ruether's concept of freedom is not a Hellenistic one or one borrowed from Gnostic or Judaic apocalypticism, but one rooted in the Hebrew understanding of God as all powerful and completely involved with creation.

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[12]Heyward, Ibid.

C. The Place of Rosemary Ruether in Feminist Theology

There are a number of tensions in feminist theology.[13] This is not surprising, given the great variety of women who are entering the theological project, and indeed this diversity gives colour and multi-dimensional insight to the feminist perspective on religion. How does Ruether see herself in relationship to her sisters in feminist theology? What does she see as her contribution? How does she see the dangers and the short-comings of the movement?

Ruether has described three main viewpoints in the religious feminist spectrum. The first is evangelical and liberal Christian feminism, of which she has been critical because those of this school think that the problem will be solved simply by better translations and exegesis and have not really taken into account the more serious political and ethical considerations inherent in Christian scripture and tradition. Second, Ruether names socialist Christian feminism, and it is in this category that she herself would belong. Third, there are what Ruether calls radical cultural feminists, those who have turned to a religion of the Goddess.[14] Although not without some appreciation for this third type of religious feminism, Ruether is particularly critical of it. She feels that goddess-worshippers have not recognised that all inherited

[13] Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow give us a useful list of a number of these in their introduction to Womanspirit Rising. They are:
(1) those using women's feminist experience versus those who focus on women's traditional experience;
(2) reformists versus post-Judeo-Christians;
(3) emphasis on nature versus emphasis on freedom;
(4) equality versus female ascendency as goals.

[14] Ruether, "Asking the Existential Questions", Christian Century. April 2, 1980. p. 377.

cultures,including the goddess cultures, have sexist elements in them; but furthermore, all important traditions, especially the biblical tradition, are a great deal more than sexism. Ruether fears the dogmatism and the romanticism connected with the feminist spirituality (or goddess) movement. Even more, she fears that this approach might turn out to be a kind of symbolic reversal that would be just as harmful to men as patriarchy has been to women, and that women would have the tendency towards megalomania and lack of self-criticism that now characterizes so much of patriarchal culture.[15]

Ruether's contribution must be seen within her own category of socialist Christian feminism. Ruether stays within the biblical tradition and the Christian community. But she sees as necessary to women's liberation a different social system to give real equality and creative opportunity for both women and men. Ruether is, however, critical of state socialism which has actually taken the ownership and management of the means of production away from the people. What Ruether is in favour of is communal socialism which would return productive work to the home and extended family. Women would not merely be "fitted into" the male work pattern, but family values would be extended to the world. Not only would male roles open to women, but at the same time female roles would be adapted to men.[16]

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[15]Ruether, "A Religion for Women: Sources and Strategies", Christianity and Crisis, Dec. 10, 1979. pp. 307f.

[16]Ruether, "Why Socialism Needs Feminism and Vice Versa", Christianity and Crisis, April 2, 1980. p. 103.
Also, Sidney Thomson Brown supports Ruether's alternative approach to the division of labour in society. See "Working Women and the Male Workday", Christianity and Crisis. February 21, 1977, vol.37, no. 1,p.26f.

Ruether sees herself neither as merely making the biblical tradition palatable, nor as rejecting it altogether. She is opting for something more difficult than either of these alternatives. She is both admitting the depth of the sexist problem and she is refusing to flee from it. While Mary Daly admits the problems, she turns away to create a new time/space of her own, an Otherworld.[17] In this kind of flight Ruether would see gnostic-like escape, just as in not admitting the problems she sees a tinkering that does not really change anything. Ruether is not concerned with being accepted by the world as it is or with creating her own; she is interested in truly changing the world. What Ruether is saying is that religious feminism must have a political dimension based on both radical criticism of, and loyal commitment to, the life of the community. Again, Ruether is more than a mid-point in the religious feminist spectrum. Her voice is one that calls us to change not only on the personal level, but also on the level of the political reality of our world. Ruether has been not only consistently loyal to the church; she has also been constantly involved in the women's movement.

Betty Friedan believes that we are now entering the second stage of the women's movement. In admitting the shortcomings of the secular movement up until now, she reaches out to a "new wholeness, an integration" that is more than self-fulfilment and is political, aimed at overcoming the polarity between women and men as well as at creating a

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[17] Daly, Mary, Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978.

really human social system and government.[18] What Friedan is now expressing on the secular level, Rosemary Ruether has been advocating as a socialist Christian feminist for some time. Clearly, Ruether's perspective is vital, not only amongst religious feminists, but in the wider women's movement.

D. The Contribution of Women Doing Theology

What has been the impact of feminist theology? How is the church different because of the increased numbers and activity of women in religious studies? It is still too early to assess the influence of either feminist theology or the women involved in it. Certainly there are new ideas, such as wholeness, being talked about--but how can one ascertain whether this is due to women or whether this would have happened anyway in liberal theology? Certainly there are more women in theological colleges as students and there is more pressure to have women on the teaching staff as well--but are these students finding work in the church, and are women teachers more than tokens? There are more books on women's issues in religion--but how seriously are these being taken? No convincing answers can yet be given. Women are now more highly visible in the theological enterprise and in most church structures, but we do not know exactly what this means or what difference it is making. There is more awareness, and more questions have been generated, but we cannot say whether there has been funda-

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[18] Friedan, Betty, "Feminism's Next Step", The New York Times Magazine. July 5, 1981, Section C, p. 14f. This article is adapted from The Second Stage by Betty Friedan published October, 1981, by Summit Books.

mental change.

Real change in the church and in the theological enterprise seems to me to be the most meaningful criterion by which to judge the contribution of women in theology. So far, much of feminist theology has rightly aimed at describing the situation and at self-understanding. Ruether's work is important because it is oriented to change. Religious feminism needs to go beyond description and the gaining of self-confidence and expertise to developing strategies of change in theological systems, institutions, the church and human communities. In this second step, Ruether with her political analysis should be even more in evidence than previously.

A note of caution must be sounded about evaluating religious feminism. Success cannot be measured in terms of one-issue goals, but rather in terms of the depth of awareness and real change that is brought about. Depth is needed to motivate what promises to be a long-term project. Nor can feminism's contribution be measured merely by looking at the growth of specifically woman-related areas. Feminist theologians are interested in more than the woman question. This is well illustrated by Rosemary Ruether, whose important work on many topics should not be overlooked because of her feminist commitment. Feminist theology and theologians cannot be seen as a separate field, but as a perspective and as persons with valuable insight, important to many questions. The diffuseness of the feminist endeavour will make it hard to assess, but does not gainsay its significance.

E. Freedom--the Goal Both Near and Far

What is it that women want? What is it that all human beings long for? What is this bright-shining, all-embodying concept of freedom that everyone honours and serves, but so few understand?

It is important, especially in times of stress and turmoil, to try to understand the hopes and goals that beckon to us, to reckon with the horizons of faith. It is important, because in times of high anxiety and possibility it is crucial that our changing be creatively directed. Especially in times of rapid change, we need to own our reasons for being. We, modern persons, claim freedom as hope and goal; it is important that we understand what that means.

Change can threaten persons into anti-freedom in the name of liberty from insecurity. Crisis in the world situation or the world view can cause human regression, withdrawal, and behaviour that is counter-productive to human well-being. Yet change can also challenge humanity with its messianic opportunity if hope that is understood provides a sufficient security. Our age is a time of great change, a time of much questioning, great insecurity, new searches for meaning, and intense theological activity. How we respond in our situation of world crisis, the direction we take in the change that is certain, depends largely on the depth and breadth of our understanding of what freedom is.

It is in this context that Ruether's probing questioning and theorising is valuable. She represents (along with others) the participation of a whole new group of people in the theological project. Not only are women now finding their voice in theology, but other groups of previously marginalized persons are contributing to the search for the meaning of

freedom at this crucial time. The base group doing theological reflection has been broadened at a significant moment. Theology is being done by a body of thinkers more representative of human diversity. This in itself is profoundly important, even although we cannot yet see the results.

In our global context of great change, Ruether's work is also important because of the depth of her understanding and the breadth of her vision. Our contemporary ideas about freedom are too given to shallowness and narrowness. But Ruether's approach goes to the very roots of our culture to ask questions that shake the foundations. Ruether also refuses to be limited in scope by narrow loyalties to the women's movement, to academic scholarship, to national preoccupations, or to class interests. What Ruether means by freedom would mean liberation for all earth's people since she gives us a theory for understanding oppression as an interlocking reality that must be changed. Ruether tries to bridge many chasms, not with blissful ignorance, but with penetrating insight.

Rosemary Ruether's contribution to the modern theological concept of freedom (and salvation) is not without its limits and weaknesses. She needs clarity, scholarly precision, compelling and concise expression, and renewed courage to follow through on the earth-shaking questions that she has raised.[19] She is still young. Her contribution to

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[19] Several writers have criticized Ruether's lack of scholarly precision while appreciating her ability to raise highly significant questions: for example, James Parkes in Preface to Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity, (ed) Allan T. Davies. New York: Paulist Press, 1971. pp. x-xi. Also J. C. Meagher in the same volume, pp. 2 and 25. In the same volume, p. 225, Terence R. Anderson suggests that Ruether does not make explicit the connection between her moral convictions and doctrine.

the theological search for freedom (like that of feminist theology as a whole) is, one hopes, only beginning. Perhaps her most far-reaching new insights are those connected with her study of the Jewish question and the meaning for Christians of the messianic, and this in its fullest personal and political dimensions. Rosemary Ruether has demonstrated that she has the capacity, the background, and the contemporary concern which establish the value of the insights that she has already given us. It is with optimism that we look forward to her continued development as she searches both deeply and broadly after the truth which sets us all free.

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